UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A MEDIATED REALITY:

THE MASS MEDIA AND PAN-CANADIAN IDENTIFICATION -

ECONOMIC, OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON NEWS INTERPRETATION

BY

Patrick Stephen Davies

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A Mediated Reality: The Mass Media and Pan-Canadian Identification - Economic, Occupational and Environmental Influences on News Interpretation submitted by Patrick Stephen Davies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts.

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August 12, 1994

To my parents

ABSTRACT

The last quarter century has witnessed a revolution in Canadian politics. The mass media now have greater power than ever before to interpret and affect the national agenda, the performance and reputation of governments, and the nature and level of the average citizen's participation in the democratic process. The agencies of mass communication are crucial actors in the establishment of the values, priorities and bases of comparison held by the general public. Comprehensive academic research has documented both the existence and importance of the media's effect on political behavior: the product of its news agencies influence the priorities and bases of comparison held by members of their audience. But the fact that the media agenda -- the information selected, and the interpretation given to it -- is itself the product of a variety of constraints is problematic. The impact of ownership structures, professional behavior, audience conceptions, legal restrictions, political manipulation, cultural environments, and technical limitations on media content is considerable: the public agenda itself is substantially a creation of those media influences. But these forces often mitigate, or are directly prejudicial toward a reasoned, comprehensive, and accurate relaying of information. The author contends that media coverage may solidify and exacerbate the pervasive regionalism and provincial self-absorption so characteristic of Canadian politics. Accordingly, in keeping with the academic evidence of pervasive media "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming", this thesis makes two assertions about the media: first, the media play a significant role in setting the public agenda, and second, that various legal, technical, political, economic, occupational and environmental factors influence the substance of that agenda. The subject of the test case offers evidence that, in Canada, the latter three factors are the most important. Media coverage of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's speech on the Charlottetown Accord displayed distinctive patterns of perception and emphasis, perhaps attributable to provincial location and institutional ownership. Interpretations of this particular event followed a predictable, standardized course, and displayed a variety of characteristics perhaps rooted in organizational routines. With regard to this political event, it is plausible the news media contributed to Canada's most serious societal rift: the linguistic-political divide.

"[The press] is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of the darkness into vision."

-Walter Lippmann (1922)

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Introduction

"Great is journalism," wrote Carlyle, for "is not every able editor a ruler of the world, being a persuader of it?"[1] The agencies of mass communication have the potential to wield enormous power in our society, by influencing the subjects and perimeters of debate, reinforcing belief systems, and defining the relationship between the individual and the modern community. The media are the bridge connecting populations with their leaders, and are the link between governments and their societies. In the light of their authority, this thesis explores the ramifications of the media's message with regard to public perceptions and belief structures. In the words of one author, the media affect and shape reality much as a kaleidoscope filters and alters light.[2] Studies have demonstrated that a strong correlation exists between the necessarily artificial reality that is contained within the media's message and the political agenda held by members of the general public. The media play a significant role in setting the public agenda, especially in the realm of politics. It is likely that the various economic, occupational, cultural and political factors that influence the manner in which the media construct that agenda are significant determinants of it. In Canada, the most important of these various factors might be regional and occupational in origin. As it has been demonstrated that news selection, its interpretation, and the manner of its presentation have a significant effect on the public's view of the world, the media's role in society raises several important questions as to the nature and state of our political process. It has particular relevance for Canada as the media may foster, or contribute to the pervasive regionalism and provincial self-absorption that are so characteristic of the politics of this country.

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[1] Cited in Edwin Black, Politics and the News - The Political Functions of the Mass Media (Toronto: Butterworth & Company, 1982), p.2.

[2] David H. Weaver, "Media Agenda-Setting and Media Manipulation" in Mass Communication Review Yearbook Volume 3 1982 D. Charles Whitney, Ellen Wartella and Sven Windahl, eds. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp.538-39.

This thesis attempts to take a fresh, but complimentary approach to the existing media effects literature. It tries to look behind those phenomena referred to by academics as "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming". My purpose is to recognize the legitimacy of these models of media functions, and then to discover if factors attributable to them are apparent in news coverage. This thesis looks specifically at the media themselves, then, rather than their product. It tries to separate the providers from the message, with the specific aim of discovering what forces affect the media in their daily operations, hence influencing characteristics of the world picture they present to consumers. The thesis builds upon the existing documentation of media effects, and relates this literature to the fractured state of Canadian unity and corporate concentration in the field of mass communications. Borrowing the gatekeeping model, it attempts to illuminate the various economic, organizational, cultural and societal factors that produce the media's own agenda, and hence shape the public reality through them. It tries to illustrate and explain the particulars of how the media go about constructing the components of an agenda for their consumers, by highlighting some issues or perspectives while ignoring or downplaying others.

This thesis makes two assertions about the media: first, their agencies play a significant role in setting the public agenda, especially the political agenda; and second, that various "gatekeeping" factors, concerned with economic limitations, occupational routines, legal restrictions, political strategies, and environmental forces influence the manner in which that agenda is established. The working hypothesis is that, in Canada, economic, occupational and environmental considerations are the most influential of these factors shaping media output. The case study is designed to discover if readily discernible patterns of news coverage and interpretation actually exist in the media product of this country, patterns that are unique and distinctive to provincial location, occupational customs and institutional ownership.

In accordance with this goal, the news coverage of a particular political event has been selected for analysis. Former prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's response to the Charlottetown constitutional accord was perhaps the most celebrated intervention into the debate over the agreement during the 1992 national referendum campaign, and sparked considerable media attention from coast to coast. The reporting of Trudeau's opinions and the subsequent furor concerning both his role in the debate over Charlottetown and the legacy of his governments might prove to be distinctive. Coverage might demonstrate different nuances of perspective between provincially- and corporately-distinct media institutions. It might also display characteristics of scope and depth attributable to facts of ownership and organizational imperatives. The subject of the test case, then, was not a neutral selection, but rather a carefully chosen one that might spark coverage most helpful in testing whether the various factors shaping media output are obvious in media product, and whether the central assertion of this thesis, that economic, occupational and environmental considerations are the most influential of the various factors shaping the media, and hence the public agenda in this country, may be substantiated. The subject of the case study was selected to see how the various forces shaping media "output" interact, and operate in the Canadian context.

On the basis of their location and ownership, twelve Canadian newspapers were selected for analysis, and their coverage of Trudeau's speech and the reaction to it was monitored for the remaining 25 days of the referendum campaign. Through an examination of specific characteristics of the news coverage, along with the various interpretations given to Trudeau's views by reporters and the editorial and journalistic comment sparked by his words, it was hoped that the veracity of the gatekeeping model of news content assembly might be proven. Distinctive patterns of perception and emphasis, rooted in provincial location or market, organizational routines, and institutional ownership might be revealed. Further, such characteristics of coverage would be of crucial political importance when placed in context with the documented connection between media product and the issue prioritizations and judgment criteria held by individual citizens.

The thesis is organized along the following format. After a section presenting and discussing the subject of the test case, Chapter One begins by placing them in context in Canada and explaining the political significance of their role in society. It then goes on to define the concepts of "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming", and provide the academic evidence for them. Chapter Two presents the various factors shaping media output, in keeping with the gatekeeping conceptualization. Chapter Three contains the hard data of the test case, a detailed survey of the media reaction to Trudeau's reaction to the Charlottetown Accord. The conclusion of the thesis connects the findings of the newspaper survey to the various theoretical imperatives on media output presented in Chapter Two.

"A mess that deserves a big No" - Pierre Trudeau speaks out on the Charlottetown Accord

On the evening of Thursday, October 1, 1992, former prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau spoke to both the group "Friends of *Cité libre*" and Canada as a whole. His subject was the Charlottetown Accord, the proposed package of legislative and jurisdictional amendments that would finally complete the Mulroney government's primary political objective of obtaining Quebec's signature on the Constitution, as spelled out in the famous speech at Sept-Illes, Quebec. Trudeau's reaction to the Accord, negotiated by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as native organizations, was widely predicted. His thoughts on Quebec nationalism and collective rights were well known and long-standing; they had formed the basis of his world outlook throughout his adult life, guided his long career at the national level of Canadian politics, and led to the most important of his governments' achievements: the Constitution Act, 1982, and its accompanying Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. After retiring from active politics in the spring of 1984, Trudeau had largely disappeared from public view, practicing law at a prestigious firm in Montreal. But he felt that the constitutional changes advanced by the 1987 Meech Lake Accord -- in particular its acknowledgment that Quebec constituted a distinct society within Canada -- so undercut the foundation of the Charter that they required that he take a more active role. Writing in The Toronto Star, and then later appearing before the Senate, Trudeau helped galvanize opposition against the hitherto largely accepted Accord. When that agreement failed to be ratified in June 1990, the former prime minister was credited -- and condemned -- for having played an enormously significant part in its destruction.

The Charlottetown constitutional accord, negotiated after two years of increasingly serious and bitter intergovernmental and societal relations within Canada, attempted to solve the now widely recognized flaws of the original Meech agreement -- that it did not adequately define the meaning of "distinct society" and gave up too much federal power to the provinces -- along with addressing two issues which Meech did not mention: Senate reform and aboriginal self-government. The resultant document was put to a national referendum on October 26, 1992, a date imposed by the Quebec government's own referendum deadline on the constitutional issue. Trudeau's opinion of the new agreement was first expressed by implication, in the form of a scathing article attacking Quebec nationalism published on September 28 in *Maclean's* and *l'Actualite* magazines. Amid much publicity and soaring circulation numbers, and causing a national furor, Trudeau expressed his disdain for the Quebec's political leadership and detailed the long history of federal initiatives to accommodate the shifting wants of its successive governments within the federation. Dismissing the demands of Quebec's leaders for ever increasing provincial jurisdiction over matters previously federal in responsibility, he likened them to "master blackmailers." In his words, "each new ransom paid to stave off the threat of schism will simply encourage the master blackmailers to renew the threat and double the ransom....the blackmail will cease only if Canada refuses to dance to that tune."[3]

Then, on October 1, the former prime minister spoke at the restaurant *la Maison du Egg Roll*, in east Montreal, and gave his exact views on the Charlottetown Accord. His opinion was based on the fundamental tenet of classical liberalism: that individual rights should always triumph over collective rights. He paid special attention to the Canada Clause, a new preamble to the Constitution, that would inform governments and courts in their interpretation of the document, including the Charter. Trudeau perceived this clause as having a terrible consequence: he said it would establish a hierarchy of rights in the country. Instead of equality for all Canadians, which he saw as having been established in 1982, Charlottetown proposed a renewed inequality. As defined in the Canada Clause, the nation was the "sum" of its "parts." Quebec was to be recognized as a distinct society, with the characteristics of a French-speaking majority, a unique culture and a tradition of civil law. The role of its provincial government was to preserve and protect that distinctiveness. Aboriginal Canadians were to be granted the right to promote their languages, culture and traditions through their own governments, which were to constitute one of the three orders of government in Canada. Canadians and their governments were committed to the vitality and development of [official languages] minority communities. There were similar promises with regard to the preservation of racial and ethnic equality, the respect for both individual and collective human rights and freedoms, and the equality of female and male persons. And Canada was defined as a democracy, committed to a parliamentary and federal system of government, the rule of law and the principle of provincial equality, while simultaneously recognizing their diverse characteristics.

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[3] Pierre Elliot Trudeau, "Trudeau Speaks Out" in *Maclean's* (September 28, 1992) pp.22-26.

According to Trudeau, "ordinary Canadians", whose rights were not specified in the Canada Clause, would come last. Their individual rights would be subordinated to the rights of the provinces, and the collective rights of aboriginals, ethnic minorities and Quebec's distinct society. The issue was further confused by the fact that the clause made a distinction between "Canadians" versus "Canadians and their governments" in terms of their commitment to certain rights. The interpretative Canada Clause would weaken the existing protection contained in the Charter against discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental and physical disability, he argued. Trudeau attacked the many contradictions and omissions he saw inherent in the clause and in the other provisions of the Charlottetown Accord. He made the following points: there was no commitment on the part of Canadians to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The participation of non-aboriginal Canadians in aboriginal governments was left unclear. The much-criticized "notwithstanding" clause contained in the 1982 Charter remained unaltered. Assurances of provincial equality stood side by side with a recognition of one province's distinctiveness, an apparent contradiction. The commitment to bilingual government services was vague and subject to further negotiations. The proposals regarding "social and economic union" were unenforceable. The agreement on the part of the provinces to elect their new senators was not unanimous. Laws materially affecting French language or culture would be subject to a double majority for passage. Supreme Court justices would be named from provincially-provided and hence provinicially-biased lists. And the new areas of exclusive provincial responsibility (education, environment, immigration, forestry, mining, tourism, labor, culture, housing, recreation) constituted a dangerous forsaking of essential federal powers.

Trudeau argued that the Charlottetown Accord both threatened to diminish individual rights and abandon federal jurisdictions to the provinces, and -- if passed -- would virtually guarantee constitutional discussions in Canada for perpetuity, as it left a great number of questions unanswered. Fully 26 of the clauses contained in the document were marked with an asterisk, to indicate that they required future intergovernmental negotiation and political solution. Finally, the former prime minister warned Canadians that the consequences of their decision on October 26 to either support or reject the Charlottetown agreement were not only enormously important to the future of the country, but were also irreversible, given its re-establishment of Quebec's veto over future changes to the Senate, the House of Commons, and the Supreme Court. Trudeau termed the Accord "a mess that deserves a big No," and appealed to Canadians to reject it.

It is the hypothesis of this thesis that a variety of factors shape media news coverage; it is the author's proposal that in certain instances, some of these factors may be more significant than others as determinants of characteristics of that response. A close examination of the twelve newspapers' coverage of Trudeau's speech may support the author's belief that the interpretation given to certain events and personalities by journalists contributes to the regional perspectives so characteristic of Canadian politics. Academic evidence to substantiate such a position may be found in Chapter One, which begins with a discussion of the role played by the agencies of mass communication in society and then reviews the media effects literature, defining the concepts of "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming".

Chapter One - The Canadian Media in Context and Three Conceptualizations of Media Effects

The agencies of mass communication can wield enormous power in society. They often determine what people will think and talk about, define the legitimate bounds for public discussion, and influence both individual behavior and government decisions. As Mary Vipond put it, "the [media] for most people specif[y] what's read and what's not (priorities), what's good and what's bad (values) and what's related to what else and how (relations)."[4] They are filters through which society views itself; they both reflect and help to mold our culture.[5] The media act as information separators, articulating, legitimizing and restricting the events and issues that form the substance of the public consciousness, determining the bounds of legitimate debate in a society, and helping to construct "interpretative frameworks" that shape the discussion of issues among their audience.[6] In an increasingly complicated, fast-paced world, they are the only source of information on some matters for most members of the general public. The interpretation of events and issues that they offer frequently becomes the majority opinion. An image in the media may become the reality for many, as the credibility of the institutions of the mass media and the accuracy of their portrait of reality is largely unquestioned.[7]

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[4] Mary Vipond, The Mass Media in Canada (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1989), p.7.

[5] Ibid., p.100.

[6] Donald C. Wallace and Frederick J. Fletcher, Canadian Politics Through Press Reports (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.1.

[7] Michael J. Robinson and Andrew Kohut, "Believability and the Press" in Public Opinion Quarterly 52:2 (Summer 1988), pp.174-89. One of their findings is that the overwhelming majority of the general public believes what is reported in the media. The authors conclude that "there is no believability crisis for the press." (188) The existence of such mass acceptance should not be misinterpreted as implying mass agreement, however. Over the past few years, particularly in this country, it has

In a democratic society issues compete for a limited public attention. Those that capture widespread interest -- that become part of the agenda of civic discussion and activism -- are more likely to receive attention and possible legislative remedy by governments than those that do not. Certain issues and individuals may have reduced, or no influence according to the level of media -- and hence public -- attention, for if an event or topic does not attract media interest, in the minds of a significant portion of the population it does not exist. The media are *primers* or definers of reality, indicators of the strengths and weaknesses of public policy and the pronouncers of societal injustices. As such, they act to shape perceptions of contemporary society that become integral to the public consciousness. One author has posited the idea that the media act as a "feedback loop" for our democratic system, much like a thermostat controls the operation of a furnace, in that their agencies supply information about the performance of the system's components -- specifically individual politicians and institutions of government -- that maintain its overall functioning.[8] By acting like such a feedback mechanism, the news media are one of the principal architects of political socialization, defined by Doris Graber as "the learning and accepting of norms and rules, structures, and environmental factions that govern political life."[9] Thus the media do more than merely reflect society; they also actively shape and influence it.

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become clear that a significant percentage of the public disagrees with the media's position on a number of issues, ranging from trade agreements to constitutional amendments. The prevalence of public cynicism toward politics and politicians, along with growing suspicion about the motives of the business community in supporting several recent federal initiatives has acted to erode the media's power to sway public opinion. But the media's ability to set the agenda of public discussion -- regardless of issue -- must receive recognition for its political and social significance.

[8] Oscar H. Gandy, Beyond Agenda-Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company, 1982), p.2.

[9] Doris A. Graber, Mass Media and American Politics (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), p.150.

This chapter will analyze the role of the mass media in society, define and present the academic evidence for the media effects of "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming", and discuss their political implications.

Media Functions

There is a wide variety of opinions on the overall function of the mass media. The agencies of mass communication have alternately been regarded as a "fourth branch of government"[10] and as an ideological support system.[11] These two descriptions reveal the gulf separating those of the liberal democratic (or liberal pluralist) and neo-Marxist perspectives on the mass media. According to the former view, the media play a vital role in modern politics, performing many activities essential to the effective operation of our system of democratic government. They inform and educate the electorate, provide an accessible forum for policy and issue debate, publicize the positions of opposition parties and interest groups, and announce and evaluate the performance of governments and institutions. They examine the strengths and weaknesses of public policy, and criticize the standards of behavior and ethics demonstrated by politicians. In performing this myriad of duties, the mass media are seen as autonomous of the state, political organizations and institutionalized lobby groups, and are in effect one of the integral political actors in our society.

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[10] Frederick J. Fletcher and Daphne Gottlieb Taras, "Images and Issues: The Mass Media and Politics in Canada," in Canadian Politics in the 1990s - Third Edition Michael S. Whittington and Glen Williams, eds. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), p.224. See also Arthur Siegel, Politics and the Media in Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1983), p.ix.

[11] See Michael Parenti, "News Media Bias and Class Control," in Manipulating Public Opinion - Essays on Public Opinion as a Dependent Variable Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser, eds. (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1989), pp.253-70.

The media's daily circulation of information is itself a communication link between the general population and those who make the decisions on its behalf in both politics and business. Wallace and Fletcher detail the mass media's functions in this regard: the media "provid(e) [decision makers] with information on reactions to policy initiatives and the activities of other agencies, and with useful summaries of complex reports that they would not otherwise have time to digest."[12]

According to the alternate, neo-Marxist view, the agencies of mass communication function as a crutch for the status quo, reinforcing the dominant values of a society, with all its commensurate social, political and economic inequalities. Thus the media serve the interests of the elite, at the expense of the well-being of the majority. Several authors have advanced this thesis: that the media act to fortify the establishment. This function is usually seen to be "accidental" in the sense that it is a side effect of usual patterns of media operations, and not the result of some dark conspiracy. Black attributes the "occupational biases [within the media] favoring 'newsworthiness' and 'personalized reporting'" as having the effect of reinforcing the major values of our society.[13] The media protect the hierarchy by established patterns of coverage and standardized interpretations of events, according to this view. There is a school of thought that sees the media's paramount function to be the maintenance of "political quiescence" and the ensuring of the smooth operation of the economy."[14] Authors such as Terence Qualter and Michael Parenti[15] argue that, for a number of reasons, the media are anti-democratic. In Qualter's view, the media insist on interpreting the news in keeping with a standard pattern, structuring their coverage in order to achieve a desired "social reality."[16] He gives the example that the U.S. media view the world from a perspective championing American interests; foreign news is interpreted according to whether it has impact on U.S. citizens or U.S. concerns. Canadian media also tend to interpret issues and events according to their perceived relevance to their province's residents, and its established economic or cultural-linguistic realities.

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[12] Wallace and Fletcher, p.1.

[13] Black, pp.31-2.

[14] Ibid, p.91.

[15] Terence Qualter, "The Role of the Mass Media in Limiting the Public Agenda," in Manipulating Public Opinion - Essays on Public Opinion as a Dependent Variable (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1989), pp.139-152; and Michael Parenti,

There is an element of truth to both the liberal-democratic and neo-Marxist views of the media. The agencies of mass communication clearly assist our democratic system in their daily operation. They also, in setting the perimeters of debate and by continually emphasizing majority values, do much to reinforce both the capitalist economic system and define acceptable standards of public behavior and the bounds of legitimate debate.[17] Obviously, the media do not operate in a vacuum -- they internalize and foster the established cultural, economic, social and political traditions of their society. According to a neo-Marxist perspective, the media's autonomy from the system is merely an illusion -- they are the puppets of an established dominant corporate class, and actively work, by way of their selection of stories and their interpretation of them, to construct analytical frameworks for the public that protect that group's

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Inventing Reality - The Politics of the Mass Media (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

[16] Qualter, p.139.

[17] It is important to note that both the liberal-democratic and neo-Marxist schools of thought regarding the media's role in politics contain a particular conception of the audience. According to the former, the audience has the ability to manipulate the media in an vast number of ways, while the latter's view that the media acts to perpetuate class domination implies an audience model that is captive, passive, lacking in influence.

privilege.[18] To a certain extent this debate is founded on a difference of opinion over exactly what role the press should play in society: whether they should be "common carriers"[19], like transportation systems or telecommunication networks, freely transmitting any traffic or information without bias or embellishment, or whether they should operate with cognizance of the great social responsibility that is inherent in their enormous power over society, and strive to report the news truthfully, comprehensively, and in intelligent fashion. A popular conception of the mass media, particularly among those within the industry, has much in common with the "common carrier" idea. Utilizing a mirror analogy, many journalists profess to believe that societal reality is merely reflected by the media. This perspective has been convincingly disproved. There are often glaring differences between a given image or interpretation of events in the media and the reality. Systematic biases toward minority groups and certain types of news have been documented.[20]

In Canada, the press are commonly regarded as incorporating elements of both the libertarian and the social responsibility models.[21] They are allowed significant freedom to investigate and relay information under the law (although certainly less than their counterparts in other countries, even between the industrialized democracies), but are expected, in the light of that freedom, to exercise responsibility in their operations, and to be as fair and as trustworthy as possible. There is a greater history of state involvement in the realm of mass communications in this country, as opposed to the United States, whose media have enjoyed historic and far-reaching protection under the First Amendment. While there is some government activity in communications in the U.S. (for example the Public Broadcasting System and the 1970 Newspaper Preservation Act), such institutions and legislation pale in comparison -- both in terms of financial scope and mandated ambition -- with practices in Canada. Beyond the creation and continued operation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and its counterpart Radio-Canada, and the regulatory and administrative functions of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), over the last several decades governments at the provincial levels have also involved themselves in the realm of public broadcasting.

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[18] The most famous proponent of this view is American academic Noam Chomsky, who summarized his thesis as follows: "The mass media of the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion." Cited in Peter Desberats, Guide to Canadian News Media (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p.148.

[19] Black, p.28.

[20] Fletcher and Taras, p.223.

[21] Siegel, p.18.

There have been several ambitious studies and commissions at the federal level to examine aspects of Canadian media and the state's relationship to them. These include the 1951 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) and the 1961 Royal Commission on Publications (the O'Leary Commission). Two of the most important for the purposes of this thesis were the 1970 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (the Davey Committee) and the 1981 Royal Commission on Newspapers (the Kent Commission). The Davey Committee set out to discover and define the media's role in modern Canada, and in the light of their findings, made a number of recommendations to Parliament. These included the creation of both regional and national press councils (modeled on the British Press Council), a "Publications Development Loan Fund" to assist grassroots print media development, and the proposal that

Canadian magazines be both assisted and protected from their U.S. competitors. The Committee noted that the trend of concentrated ownership in mass media was reaching worrisome proportions in the country. Its report urged the government to establish a Press Ownership Review Board to ensure that future takeovers would be subject to the scrutiny of the House of Commons.[22] Although none of the Davey Committee's recommendations resulted in legislative action, some Canadian newspapers, and several members of other media, acting on their own initiative, did form community or regional press councils. Further, some years later, changes were made to the Income Tax Act that effectively offered some protection for the magazine industry. Bill C-58 required that the majority of a magazine's content was to be of domestic origin if it was to be considered Canadian, and that Canadian companies -- if they wished to qualify for income tax credits -- must buy advertising in Canadian magazines.[23]

The Kent Commission was convened in the wake of the simultaneous closings of *The Ottawa Journal* and *The Winnipeg Tribune*, events that suggested collusion between the papers' corporate owners. By the 1970s, Canadian media had become the most conglomerated in the world. The Commission's recommendations covered such subjects as rules of ownership, ownership concentration, editorial freedom, and journalistic quality. In the eyes of the commissioners, the status quo could not be allowed to continue, as "[u]nder existing law and policy, the process will continue to the bitter end; company will take over company, agglomeration will proceed until all Canadian newspapers are divisions of one or two conglomerates."[24] In addition to its echoing of the Davey Committee's call for the creation of press councils and ombudsmen, the Kent Commission proposed that a Canadian Newspaper Act be introduced, legislation that would regulate the industry in similar fashion as the existing Canadian Broadcasting Act does for broadcasting. The members of the Commission felt that such an Act would expand on the anti-combines legislation already in effect[25], and would both limit further corporate acquisitions of media institutions and require certain chains to divest themselves of certain holdings. Predictably, the reaction from the industry was swift and profoundly negative. And any political resolve that existed to push forward with legislation vanished with the results of the 1984 federal general election. The Liberals were defeated, and all pending legislation, including the proposed Canadian Newspaper Act, died on the order paper.

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[22] Walter I. Romanow and Walter C. Soderlund, Media Canada - An Introductory Analysis (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), pp.105-110.

[23] Ibid, p.41.

In Canada, a significant amount of importance and faith is placed in the agencies of mass communication. As the Massey Commission declared, public broadcasting is regarded as a "public trust" and a "public service."[26] The news that the media select for public consumption has important consequences for the attitudes, perceptions and opinions held by members of the general population. In the words of Arthur Siegel, "the mass media are carriers of our cultural stamp."[27] The government of Canada has long recognized this fact, as demonstrated by the substantial, and historic role of the public sector in the development and administration of mass communications in this country. Beginning with the railways, the telegraph and then the telephone, successive governments have regarded lifelines of communication as essential to the national future. The role of the mass media is also imbued with a significant level of social purpose. Under the 1968 Broadcasting Act, the CBC and Radio-Canada must "contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity."[28] The national regulatory body for the media, the CRTC, requires that television and radio stations and music publishers must operate in accordance with Canadian-content regulations. These legislative attempts to develop pan-Canadian unity have largely proven unsuccessful in stemming the tide of American-produced television, movies, and music. But their very existence serves as indications of the importance awarded to the consequences of mass communication in Canada.

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[24] Royal Commission on Newspapers, Report (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1981), p.220.

[25] Existing anti-combines laws were seen by members of the Kent Commission as inadequate, mainly due to the fact that the trend of recent Supreme Court decisions -- in particular the Crown's loss of what seemed to be an open-and-shut case against the Irving chain in New Brunswick -- seemed to favor the combines. See Thelma McCormack, "The Political Culture and the Press in Canada," in Canadian Journal of Political Science 16:3 (September 1983), p.452.

[26] Vipond, p.45.

[27] Siegel, p.24.

Political Importance

The role of the news media in society is one of considerable political importance. The world of politics is almost entirely beyond the realm of personal experience for most citizens. The media have largely supplanted traditional intermediary institutions such as political parties, interest groups, and public word-of-mouth as providers of political cues and interpreters of the outside world for the majority and now serve as the principal connection between politicians and their constituents. In

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[28] Cited in Andrew M. Osler, "From Vincent Massey to Thomas Kent: The Evolution of a National Press Policy in Canada" in Communications in Canadian Society, Benjamin D. Singer, ed. (Don Mills: Addison-Wesley Publishers, 1983), p.107.

Canada, political parties have little public profile between elections, and only about a third of Canadians fit the classification of "durable partisans" anyway, in that they consistently identify with a particular political party. Two thirds of the electorate demonstrate considerable flexibility in their partisanship, an indication that the connection between political parties and the electorate in Canada is a tenuous one.[29] Interest groups may have significant importance as mechanisms for citizens to exert pressure on those in government toward or away from a particular legislative direction, but their ability to successfully represent a diverse number of perspectives over time has proven fleeting.[30] And the social isolation that accompanies the increasingly urbanized and transitory nature of Canadian life mitigates against the establishment of links to the community that occurred in the past.

Media attention frequently equals political consideration, and possible legislative action. If an issue or event does not attract media notice, and thus fails to inspire widespread public interest, policy makers may omit, may decide to ignore, or may delay indefinitely their consideration.[31] For a number of reasons, then, certain subjects are fated either to be completely ignored or doomed to the obscurity that accompanies attention solely in academic circles. The items on the legislative agenda are substantially media-placed ones. This does not mean that the members of government and opposition parties are incapable of proposing legislation pertaining to subjects of particular interest to them or to their constituencies in either the individual or collective senses, nor is it meant to imply that governments are hostage to the approval of a media-manipulated public. Those in power frequently press ahead with a legislative initiative that is entirely unpopular with the electorate for reasons of political ideology or administrative necessity. Certainly a government's decision in a particular area may bear the stamp of its bureaucracy or be more the creation of special interest groups than the elected officials that hold its most prominent positions. But the media plays an important role in the process of issue selection, and the opinions of its representatives have significant impact on public perceptions.

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[29] See Howard D. Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, Absent Mandate - Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections, Second Edition (Toronto: Gage Publishing Company, 1991), pp.46-68.

[30] A recent example of this phenomenon occured in British Columbia in 1983. The package of "restraint" legislation introduced by the Social Credit government of Bill Bennett prompted a large number of interests -- ranging from the public sector unions of the B.C.G.E.U., poverty advocates, church groups, lesbian and gay rights defenders and others to band together under the umbrella organization dubbed "Solidarity". Their unity in planning to bring down the government via a general strike, however, splintered in the end, as the essential contradiction in views and eventual aims held by the members of some of the groups within "Solidarity" became apparent. See Alan Garr, Tough Guy: Bill Bennett and the Taking of British Columbia (Vancouver: Key Porter Books, 1985). Another example occured during the 1992 National Referendum. The opposition of the leadership of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women to the Charlottetown Accord was neither shared by all members of the group, nor by all women. Indeed, the stance of NAC was deemed "unrepresentative", as many prominent women in business, politics and the intellectual community endorsed the agreement.

Media coverage can both legitimize and advance components of a particular ideological perspective. Research has indicated that a media focus on "conservative" issues like crime, deficit reduction, and national defense can imbue these issues with increased importance in the mind of the public; it follows that such a reaction will assist the fortunes of the political party which has captured such subjects as its own. Thus political momentum may be a media-assisted creation. If the issues on the media "agenda" mirror those comprising a particular party's platform, this reality will force rival organizations to respond on matters not of their own choosing, subjects that may expose critical weaknesses either in policy or personality to the eyes of voters. During the Trudeau era, the Liberal party successfully made issues associated with Confederation and the ideal of strong leadership its own; the rival Progressive Conservatives were encumbered by public comparisons on those terms. Perceptions of organizational or personal weakness characteristic to a party or its candidates, compared to opinions of strength possessed by its rivals, will obviously have an impact on election results. This is why modern elections are now characterized by a fierce struggle on the part of political strategists to seize control of the agenda, to pierce the media filter and reach the audience. If a party is successful in its attempts to invest the most significant issue (or issues) of the campaign with a partisan identification, it will likely triumph at the ballot box -- such was the lesson of the 1980 and 1988 elections.

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[31] Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs," in American Political Science Review Vol.76 (December 1982), p.855.

Media coverage can also fortify certain values in their selection of, and hence legitimization of the opinions of certain establishment figures. News events are nearly always interpreted according to the views of politicians, business leaders, or members of the cultural elite. The opinions of a significant percentage of the population (specifically women, ethnic minorities, and organized labor) are usually absent from the national discussion. For example, if there is an economic downturn, the opinion of the factory owner is more often sought than those of the employees facing unemployment. In a constitutional crises, the views of politicians are widely reported, while the thoughts of their constituents, who may regard the entire subject as irrelevant, are more often than not used as mere "filler." By consistently favoring one segment of society over another, the media actively assist the maintenance of social inequalities, and protect the status quo from widespread criticism.

Favorable media assessment is an essential component of a successful run for political office. Media attention is a resource for candidates. The viability of an individual's candidacy is a function of his or her ability to attract the notice of the media. Without this recognition, the candidate will have difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers of capable campaign workers and even more important, financial backers.[32] Determining an individual candidate's *electability* substantially rests with certain prominent members of the media. Thus candidates actively court media favor, knowing that their approval is money (and delegate votes) in the bank.[33] The media alone have the ability to bestow name recognition on an individual candidate, establishing a link with the wider public, whose opinion of the chosen person will be sought during an eventual election. And the media's "participation" in the leadership selection process may be even more significant at certain times, as demonstrated by the examples of

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[32] Frederick J. Fletcher and Robert J. Drummond, "The Mass Media and the Selection of National Party Leaders: Some Explorations," in Party Democracy in Canada - The Politics of National Party Conventions ed. George Perlin (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, Inc., 1988), p.99.

[33] Two examples demonstrating the impact of media coverage on an individual's campaign are offered by what happened to John Crosbie and Jerry Brown. Crosbie's front-runner status in the 1983 race for the Progressive Conservative leadership -- at least in part a creation of a front-cover photograph in Maclean's magazine shortly before the convention -- disintegrated after an angry exchange with reporters over his inablity to speak French. Brown -- dubbed "Governor Moonbeam" by the mainstream U.S. media both during and after holding the governor ship of California -- discovered during the 1992 Democratic nomination campaign that media approval is everything. While the media obsession with front-runner Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton's sordid past more often than not relegated Brown to the back pages, what attention he received more often than nor revolved around his past use of hallucinogenic narcotics, one time romantic liason with singer Linda Ronstadt and spiritual musings rather than either his contemporary policy proposals or criticisms of the inner workings of the Democratic Party, neither of which -- possibily for that very reason -- demonstrably struck a chord with party delegates or mainstream American voters. What political momentum he possessed after Paul Tsongas withdrew from the contest quickly vanished.

John Turner and Brian Mulroney, who were inevitably mentioned for years as "heirs apparent" to Pierre Trudeau and Joe Clark, just as Jean Chrétien and Kim Campbell were presented, in turn, as the rightful successors to them. Candidates that are not taken seriously by members of the press quickly find that they are not seen as credible by party delegates. In a survey of delegates to the 1983 Progressive Conservative and 1984 Liberal party leadership conventions, Fletcher and Drummond discovered that a large number of them regarded media image as an important part of their assessment of candidates.[34] The ability of the candidate to withstand the intense media pressure characteristic of a run for national party leadership is regarded as important, too, as a kind of "baptism of fire" for the upcoming election campaign.

This has had a mixed political effect: it has assisted the fortunes of some candidates while hindering others. A charismatic figure may benefit when measured against an awkward opponent; someone who is seen to embody that elusive, although much-sought quality of "strong leadership" will likely have considerable advantage over another who endeavors to emphasize an facility for consensus-building. When "family values" are used as a yardstick, a politician who has an attractive family and stable home life may be more electorally "salable" than a competitor who has a more unusual personal status or has suffered some scandal outside of the professional realm, as demonstrated by the 1993 Progressive Conservative leadership campaign. According to a vocal minority of her opponent's supporters, the fact that front-runner Kim Campbell was twice-divorced and childless would make her less successful in attracting voters to the party than her chief rival, Jean Charest, who was both happily married and a father. The major problem with media attention to matters other than those directly pertinent to the individual candidate's ability to perform his or her public duties is that some matters brought up by media investigation will be made part of the public agenda via the "agenda-setting" and "priming" roles of media influence. These subjects may be either irrelevant or directly prejudicial to a fair electoral assessment of an individual. As irrelevant and regrettable as much of the substance of much of media coverage is, a study by David H. Weaver indicates that what may be termed "image agenda-setting" by the media -- as in the Campbell/Charest example -- is of considerable political importance with regard to influencing electoral decisions on an individual level.[35]

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[34] Fletcher and Drummond, p.97.

In order to communicate effectively with the electorate, governments or individual politicians have little option today save an appeal by way of the media. But the media are the ultimate determinators of what aspects of that message get through to the voters. The employees and the operational imperatives of the mass media determine which visual and audio clips will accompany a story, and whether the strengths or the weaknesses of certain portions of a speech or policy proposal will be

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[35] David H. Weaver, "Media Agenda-Setting and Media Manipulation," in Mass Communications Research Yearbook Volume 3 1982 D. Charles Whitney, Ellen Wartella and Sven Windahl, eds. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982). Weaver writes, "with respect to candidate images, our study suggests that the press plays a major role in making some candidates, and certain of their characteristics, more salient than others. In fact this aspect of agenda-setting by the press probably has more influence on the voter's early perceptions of the campaign, and the final choices available at election time, than does issue agenda-setting." (p. 543) See also Doris A. Graber, "The Mass Media and Election Campaigns in the United States of America," in Media, Elections and Democracy ed. Frederick J. Fletcher, volume 19 of the research studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Ottawa and Toronto: Minister of Supply and Services Canada/Dundurn Press, 1992). Graber writes, "when people are asked about what they have learned [after exposure to media messages] and why they would vote for a candidate, three out of four answers concern personality traits; they revolve around human qualities such as trustworthiness, strength of character and will, and compassion for people in all walks of life." (p.159).

highlighted, and how much coverage will be allocated to the views of political opponents or interested groups. The media alone have the ability to block some political messages while emphasizing others. While the success of the public relations industry in tailoring or managing information for public consumption on behalf of its clients -- whether members of the business community, interest groups or political organizations -- is considerable, the messages of the agencies of mass communication enjoy a special *legitimacy* that they lack. The public, it follows, is more likely to regard the information put forward on the television news or in the daily papers as more trustworthy than that offered by groups of a more obvious bias. To be more succinct, material deemed "news" may have greater power to influence than that which seems to be more merely "opinion." When politicians are allowed unfettered access to the public (during free election broadcasts, or "State of the Nation/Province" addresses) these events are invariably accompanied by "interpretation" or "analysis" segments of at least equal length, and members of the media participate actively in the event as moderators, or interrogators. And the message contained in such events, too, may lack the essential legitimacy held by the nightly newscast or the daily paper, in that it can be easily dismissed as partisan propaganda. As David Taras puts it, "news organizations are 'the arbiters' of the political system: they have the power to legitimize and delegitimize leaders, policies, and institutions."[36]

Media coverage has effect at the individual level of candidate selection, for electability is at least in part a media creation. To be considered electable, a candidate must attract not only media attention early in his or her campaign, but that coverage must be favorable as well. Without such coverage, a candidate for party nomination will not be able to attract sufficient financial support or personnel support. The media's appetite for the colorful, the charismatic, or the controversial give some individuals advantage over others. The very selectivity of media attention influences the political process: one government may be roundly criticized by the press for its patronage, while the equally-biased habits of its replacement, of a different political stripe, may pass without comment. At the personal level, an aspect of one candidate's personality or past actions may attract widespread media attention, and may thus become one of the criteria applied to him or her by delegate or members of the public; equally controversial histories on the part of competing individuals may receive little attention by either group. The dissimilar nature of media appraisal, then, makes it difficult for the public to fairly compare candidates.[37]

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[36] David Taras, The Newsmakers - The Media's Influence on Canadian Politics (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), p. 41.

Contemporary media coverage influences political and social attitudes. While the partisanship of the press in the last century was obvious to the reader, the biases and ideologies of the modern news media are much less so. Present media trends allow fact, analysis and opinion to be interwoven throughout news stories, throughout newspapers. While interpretation and perspective used to be confined to the Op/Ed page, they are no longer. This fact makes it increasingly difficult for the average audience member to distinguish between fact and opinion because they are no longer kept separate. Thus the accuracy and integrity of media information is called into question: the public can no longer trust what they read, hear, or see. The prominence awarded to the journalist's interpretations of the political process is a related development in this area: members of the profession frequently enjoy more time in the spotlight than the subjects of their reporting. Contemporary television reporting of political events is usually characterized by mere images of a politician speaking, without sound, while a reporter provides the words, interpreting and explaining his or her subject's position. The prevalence of this trend in contemporary journalism was illustrated by a survey of CBC television coverage of the 1984 campaign. Of 127 news stories focusing directing on John Turner and the Liberal party, and Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservative party -- totaling almost 6 hours of broadcast time -- direct coverage of what the two leaders were saying totaled only about 42 minutes. Roughly 88 percent of media coverage of these two individuals and their respective organizations, then, involved reporters offering their interpretations and opinions, rather than unfiltered reports of the two leaders' pronouncements.[38]

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[37] Graber, p.148.

Media coverage of election campaigns contributes to attitudes of isolation and indifference. It also misrepresents the most important aspect of this essential process: it is supposed to be a contest of ideas, of alternative directions.[39] The media's insistence on treating elections as horse races, complete with dramatic visuals, partisan exchanges, and polling results focus the public's attention on which "team" is winning and which is faltering, instead of directing them to consider what political program appears most suitable for the state of the nation at the time, and which political organization presents the best slate of candidates. Election coverage is all about the contest, rather than the process. The media are supposed to educate and inform the public during the election process; these functions are largely absent, marginalized by color commentary and advertising strategies aimed at media manipulation. The paucity of real information contained in contemporary election coverage is illustrated by the findings of one study which found that voters actually learned more about the issues from political advertising than from news agencies, whose coverage was overwhelmingly focused on the competitive aspects of the race.[40] As one author put it, contemporary journalists become "electoral bookies" at election time, obsessed with contest, as opposed to concept.[41] This portrayal of politics as a spectator sport diminishes the importance -- and the consequences -- of an informed electoral decision. To the media, electability equals newsworthiness, largely irrespective of the worth of one's ideological perspective or the strength of one's proposed political agenda. Hence media support can breed electoral strength. The essential problem with this reality is that voting choices are for the large percentage of the population that possess no concrete, fixed partisan affiliation, a decision that is as substantially influenced by media coverage as it is party advertising; since most individuals want to be on the winning

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[38] Cited in Comber and Mayne, p.92.

[39] Admittedly, a significant portion of the blame for the hollow spectacle that the modern election campaign has become must be shared by its participants, namely politicians and their backing political organizations. By attacking an opponent's idea during the campaign, and then embracing it after being elected to power, by character assassination, by utilizing the catch-phrases and buzz-words characterisitic of the advertising industry, parties and their candidates have pushed the electoral contest steadily away from the plane of ideas toward irrelevancy. The political organizations and the willing agencies of the media -- for the most part -- have worked together toward this end; the public has been their unwitting victim.

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[40] Cited in Darrell H. West, Montague Kern and Dean Alger, "Political Advertising and Ad Watches in the 1992 Presidential Nominating Campaign," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 3-6, 1992, p.4.

[41] James David Barber, cited in Jeremy R. Wilson, "Horserace Journalism: The Media in Elections," in Journal of Canadian Studies 15:4 (Winter 1980-1981), p.56.

"side", the media's pronouncements as to which party is likely to triumph on voting day impacts on the eventual result. The magnitude of the eventual result is likely to be increased by such reporting. Thus media perceptions beget public choices.

Further, the substance of the media agenda -- compared to that of a party platform -- is significantly narrower.[42] The media typically focus their attention in general terms on a small number of issues, and often one or two in particular; by contrast, the average party agenda includes proposals concerning the entire spectrum of modern government operations and responsibility. The partisan and media agendas show a marked divergence in modern elections. The media's control over the substance of the campaign agenda gives their agencies control over the context in which the eventual electoral decision is made. The media's focus on the two or three mainline parties implicitly labels the proposals and candidates belonging to organizations outside the established partisan landscape as irrelevant: this greatly narrows the choices available to the average voter. Fletcher and Everett have documented that, during elections, media coverage of Canadian parties tends to be awarded on a rough approximation of those parties' standings in the House when the election was called[43]; this mitigates against those political movements that have been created, or have grown in popularity, since the last election.

Between elections, the media's preoccupation with score keeping and the publication of poll results -- numbers that are frequently misreported, and may be based on wholly inadequate sampling techniques and data -- assist in obscuring society's attention to real, substantive issues. Hence the likely consequences of a legislative decision -- both in the immediate sense and in the long term -- are less important than dramatic opposition accusations and heated government denials. It is usually the case, too, that the media's tendency to see issues in black-and-white terms affects the public's perception of them: the creation of this "artificial polarity"[44] leads the average citizen to the belief that even the most important, complicated issues have only two sides, inevitably couched in partisan terms. This structures patterns of thinking and imposes constraints on the eventual legislative solutions offered to these problems. The media's assessment of politics is structured in accordance with two themes: politics is all about partisanship, and political candidates are more bad than good. Two studies of the 1984 election provide glaring documentation of the prevalence of such media coverage: one found that the print media devote only about a quarter of their campaign coverage to substantive issues of policy.[45] Further, reporting on CBC television and in *The Globe and Mail* was overwhelmingly biased toward the negative: 70-75 percent of candidate assessments were negative.[46] The majority of political news coverage, thus, remains devoted to the partisan aspects of the subject; not the more complicated, involved process of government.

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[42] Graber, pp. 149-150.

[43] Fletcher and Everett, p.194. A similar bias exists in terms of broadcast advertising time allocated to political parties during election campaigns.

Just as they affect the operations and makeup of political organizations, political socialization and the outcome of election campaigns, the media also influence the political agenda both in the domestic and foreign spheres. The criteria by which policy performance on the part of governments is to be judged by the public is largely a mediated reality. News reports influence the views of foreign countries held by both members of the public and those in positions of authority; these impressions place at least implicit constraints on policy, as they determine what is both politically feasible and salable at a given moment.[47] The media are also responsible for placing issues on the public and legislative agenda, and imbuing certain events with a sense of urgency. An example of this fact is found in the famine in Ethiopia, which began in the early 1980s. Even though a state of emergency had existed for years in that country -- due to the combination of drought and civil war -- little if any assistance was forthcoming neither from the publics nor governments of the affluent West until powerful video footage of starving children, shot by a British camera crew, was picked up by the major television news stations in Europe and North America. The subsequent outpouring of contributions, government initiatives and general fashionability of concern for the Ethiopian peoples' appalling circumstances during 1985-1986 was, then, a media-created phenomenon.[48] Both the western public and their governments quickly tired of the seemingly insoluble subject of African famine and went on to other concerns, a trend in societal involvement that is in large part a function of the media's endless search for new material. Just as their attention was responsible for putting Ethiopia on the map, they had a lot to do with removing it. That thousands continued to die in the region years after the problem was supposedly "addressed" mattered little: the media, and their public, had moved on to other concerns.

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[44] Comber and Mayne, p.150.
[45] Cited in Fletcher, p.178.
[46] Comber and Mayne, p.128.

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[47] Hackett, p.809.

[48] For a discusssion of this entire issue see Christopher J. Bosso, "Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and the Discovery of Famine in Ethiopia," in Manipulating Public Opinion - Essays on Public Opinion as a Dependent Variable eds. Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1989), pp.153-174.

The fleeting nature of media attention -- and the identical character of public mobilization that it creates -- is a function of a very competitive industry: timeliness equals newsworthiness. The present situation in Somalia provides another useful illustration of this fact, even more so because western attitudes toward the plight of its citizens is affected by the legacy of the Ethiopian famine: just as the media are reluctant to devote much resources to covering long-term, complex problems, their audiences (and their governments) are not attracted to them. This characteristic of modern news media -- they imbue an issue with great importance by virtue of widespread coverage, and then sentence it to oblivion through its abandonment -- made nuclear disarmament, environmental protection and South African *apartheid* in turn the central issue of their day. The entire realm of international affairs is hugely affected by the media's portrayal of the citizens and conditions of foreign nations. Peter Dahlgren found that the media's interpretation of the developing world usually follows three themes: "social disorder (political violence, political subversion, military combat), flawed development (government corruption, human rights abuses, communism), and primitivism (exoticism, barbarism)."[49] These set paths of coverage have significant impact on the public's opinion of foreign populations, and what resources western nations should be prepared to devote to their assistance. The media have a similar impact at the level of national politics.

Agencies of mass communication are responsible for much of the information about local, national and international affairs held by the majority of the population. Most individuals possess only a rudimentary knowledge about the various controversies and events that top the newscasts. As the great majority of Canadians do not have alternative means of obtaining information, considerable trust is put on the mass media to comprehensively and honestly report the news. In the course of their operations, the media help to define the boundaries of legitimate public debate, accentuating the importance of certain subjects while marginalizing others. Thus a select number of issues are deemed suitable for the news pages, while others are relegated to the "family" or "entertainment" classifications. As most media institutions utilize common source material and structure their coverage along similar -- if not identical -- lines, they effectively reinforce, rather than modify, standardized societal viewpoints. Thus the agencies of mass communication are rivals only in the narrowest sense: all save the most marginal subscribe to identical ideological tenets. They are rivals only in the sense of obtaining the most timely, salable information first. But this uniformity exists only within the bounds of the two distinct sections of Canada. The substance of public discussion -- and all the restrictions and limitations characteristic of it -- are a media creation. This has importance for the politics and societies of modern nations, and particularly significance for our own.

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[49] Peter Dahlgren with Sumitra Chakrapani, "The Third World on TV News: Western Ways of Seeing the 'Other'", in William C. Adams, ed. Television Coverage of International Affairs (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1982), p.45-63; cited in Hackett, pp.823-824.

The enormous power of the agencies of mass communication to determine the substance of the public agenda raises a fundamental question about where power lies in our political system. The media's opinion of what an informed public should know about is often quite different from that put forward by its elected representatives, and in and of itself is nearly entirely artificial, and the product of the various constraints -- economic, professional, technical, legal and political -- that operate upon its agencies. An agenda constructed at least in significant part according to such an artificial framework is obviously ill-suited to assist the citizens of a democracy in deciding which issues require urgent attention, and which are largely irrelevant. The "fairness" and "objectivity" professed by representatives of the modern media is a lie: it is an impossibility. A totally neutral picture of the world cannot emerge from the operations of contemporary journalism. With regard to objective reporting, it seems the best the public can expect is "a mindless kind of neutrality"[50] from their media providers; at worst -- albeit in isolated cases, there are indicators of outright ideological bias.[51] But as often detrimental or even destructive as certain of their operations may be, the media's message is inescapable -- it surrounds us, influencing our patterns of thinking, and affecting our political and social behavior.

Media Effects

Research into the effect of media content on public opinion began in the 1920s and 1930s, and was founded on the belief that a message broadcast to an audience would produce a homogenous and convincing reaction.[52] The initial findings appeared to confirm the strength of the direct effects idea, alternately referred to in the literature as the "magic bullet", "shotgun", "transportation" or "hypodermic needle" models. It was held that media images have the capability of penetrating the conscious and unconscious thoughts of a wide audience, and could dramatically alter the perceptions of individuals. An important example of the research conducted during this period are the Payne Fund Studies, which investigated the effect of movies on the children of rural communities. The researchers found that images had a powerful effect on the behavior of the test group in the playground: boys imagined themselves in the role of adventurers, while girls pretended to be princesses.[53] While socialization may have had much to do with these reactions, as established gender roles have been shown to condition the responses of children, the findings of these studies were taken as evidence of the veracity of the direct effects model at the time. This view of the media, as overwhelmingly powerful and influential remained commonly held among many academics until well into the 1940s. It seemed to be confirmed anew by contemporary events in Europe, where entire populations were manipulated by the propaganda of totalitarian regimes.[54]

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[50] Journalist Britt Hume, quoted in Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus: Riding with the Campaign Press Corps (New York: Random House, 1973), cited in Parenti, p.52.

[51] A glaring example of this reality is offered by the results of the 1991 provincial election in British Columbia. When the ballots were counted, the once-moribund B.C. Liberal party, which had ceased to have any elected representation after 1979, and had been a clearly marginal force in the province's politics for over four decades, was awarded sufficient seats to form the Official Opposition. The party's 1991 breakthrough came in the aftermath of then-leader Gordon Wilson's appearance on a televised debate broadcast by CBC. Media coverage of his performance -- and of the Liberal campaign in general -- crossed the boundary separating mere reporting and outright manipulation of events to suit a particular political agenda. See Stan Persky, "Taking liberties with that Liberal upsurge," in *TheVancouver Sun*, October 26, 1991, p.D2.

In the 1950s, another model of media effects was proposed by Harold Innes and Marshall McLuhan. They directed their research not at media influence but rather toward exploring the relationship between the media and society. According to their "medium theories", the dominant communications technology of a society act as crucial determinants of the perceptions and cognitions demonstrated by its membership. A "technological determinism"[55] exists in terms of cultural values and patterns of relationships; as McLuhan expressed it, "the medium is the message." To put it another way, the medium, or form has impact upon, and gives significance to that which is its content. He emphasized that different media possess different "grammars" according to their technology -- the grammar of the print medium, for example, is its typography. McLuhan discovered that exposing students to the same message via different media produced different interpretations on the part of audience members -- television and radio were demonstrably more effective in transmitting information than were lecture and print.[56] According to medium theory, media content is not what is most important: it is the nature of the medium and the demands it puts on both the information it carries and the audience that receives it which is significant. Rather than considering the print and electronic media in isolation, McLuhan saw them as components of their own message system (which itself was the product of a particular form, content and environment). What is important is the characteristics of the particular medium concerned, and its societal surroundings.

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[52] James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott, "The Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches," in Culture, Society and the Media Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, eds. (London: Methuen and Company, 1982), pp 11-12.

[53] David Taras, The Newsmakers - The Media's Influence on Canadian Politics (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), pp.26-27.

[54] Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, "The Political Effects of Mass Communication," in Culture, Society and the Media Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, eds. (London: Methuen and Company, 1982), p.240.

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[55] Walter C. Soderlund, Walter I. Romanow, E. Donald Briggs, and Ronald H. Wagenberg, Media and Elections in Canada (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1984), p.28. For a discussion of Innes and McLuhan, see Walter I Romanow and Walter C. Soderlund, Media Canada - An Introductory Analysis (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), pp.73-74

[56] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: New American Library, 1964), p.271. See also Romanow and Soderlund, p.74.

Around this time, another body of research seemed to support a "minimal effects" argument. It was discovered that people read selectively, and exercise considerable discrimination in their consumption of media product. The effect, correspondingly, of media images was interpreted to be the strengthening or bolstering of previously held beliefs. The findings of a series of studies conducted in both the United States and the United Kingdom between 1940 and the mid-1960s supported a "reinforcement thesis."[57] During elections, the majority of voters were discovered to be little affected by information in the mass media: most had decided their partisan allegiances before the campaign had even started. A series of voting studies conducted by the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Research confirmed these findings. Researchers found little evidence that the media had a significant impact in influencing voter decisions in either the 1940 or 1948 U.S. presidential elections.[58] *The People's Choice*, the landmark survey published in 1944 was one of the first to question the conventional wisdom in its discovery that the media were far less powerful in determining voting decisions -- in this case in the 1940 American presidential election -- than was previously thought.[59] This study was followed by others, all finding that the opinions of most people are greatly influenced by factors completely outside the realm of mass communications, such as previous individual experiences and a wide range of "environmental" factors, including religious beliefs, relationships with family and friends, level of education, and type of employment.[60] The authors of one review of theoretical approaches to the media point out that those of the minimal effects "school" did qualify their thesis by admitting that, in certain circumstances, the media could have great influence over their audience. Those circumstances likely included: "when audience attention is casual, when information rather than attitude or opinion is involved, when the media source is prestigious, trusted or liked, when monopoly conditions are more complete, when the issue at stake is remote from the receiver's experience or concern, when personal contacts are not opposed to the direction of the message, or when the recipient of the message is not cross pressured."[61] The accuracy of several of these qualifications would be confirmed by later research. However, the general image of the media, as a "passive transmitter", largely ineffectual itself of imposing opinions and perceptions, was popular at least until the end of the 1960s.

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[57] Blumler and Gurevitch, pp.243-244.

[58] Cited in Lee B. Becker, "The Mass Media and Citizen Assessment of Issue Importance: A Reflection on Agenda Setting Research" in Mass Communication Research Yearbook 3 1982 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), p.522.

[59] Cited in Romanow and Soderlund, p.71.

[60] Taras, p.29.

But what the researchers of the minimal effects school did not consider was that the media might have a more subtle relationship with the political behavior demonstrated by their audience. Instead of influencing the decisions of voters, perhaps the agencies of mass communication had the effect of placing a series of choices in the minds of individuals, choices that were themselves of a limiting nature. The middle position on media effects that began to emerge in the 1970s, and which is current today, combines elements of both the "magic bullet" and "minimal effects" perspectives. According to modern research, the media do not actively affect the beliefs of their audience, but rather *structure* the patterns of public thinking by focusing attention on an event, issue or personality. The fact that the media spotlight a subject makes it important to the public.

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[61] Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, p.13.

The media have the ability to determine the *salience* of issues. As Bernard Cohen wrote, "the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[62] An issue or event has political significance only so long as it holds media attention; without that attention it quickly disappears from sight. Further, the interpretation and portrayal given to these subjects also have great impact on the public's perceptions of them. The mere adjective or narrative theme chosen may have as important an impact on the audience member as what event or issue is selected for presentation. Such terms as "beleaguered", "embittered" or "ineffectual" to describe a public figure may have a subtle, but pervasive impact on future public perceptions of that individual. The interrelated concepts of "gatekeeping" and "agenda-setting" along with the idea of "priming" have been developed to explain the media's effect on individual attitudes and perceptions. These concepts will be defined, the evidence for them discussed, and their political implications proposed in the next several sections.

Gatekeeping and Agenda-Setting

The concepts of "gatekeeping" and "agenda-setting" are two sides of the same coin. Both examine media content from the perspective of the sender as opposed to the receiver. One explains the process of information selection by those within the media, while the other illuminates its consequences. The term "gatekeeper" was first coined by sociologist Kurt

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[62] Quoted in Siegel, pp.14-15.

Lewin in 1943 with regard to the cultural process by which food moves through various channels (purchasing, cultivating, cooking) to the dinner table.[63] His concept was applied to the development of the news story by several authors, including Walter Schramm and David Manning White.[64] In the journalism literature, "gatekeepers" are usually defined in a strictly *micro* sense: the select individuals -- the reporters, editors, producers -- who decide what information shall be declared "newsworthy" and will be passed on to the public. "Gatekeeping" is the result of their labors. The influence held by the individual media employee, one author notes, is "directly proportional to the amount of power and responsibility [the person] has written into his or her job description."[65] A publisher has vastly more input into coverage decisions than does the junior reporter. However, a definition of "gatekeeping" that concerns itself entirely with the human processes of information selection and with the exercise of individual discretion involved with it is inherently problematic, in that it ignores the variety of forces which affect the decisions of all media employees, regardless of their position. News selection may be a product of cultural constraints, the type of medium the information is destined for, and organizational imperatives, such as timeliness and economics. It may result from the intense rivalry between competing media institutions. Conceptions of the audience may be a factor. And internal, operational standards may be influential as well. As pointed out by Denis McQuail, a significant portion of the nightly newscast is "artificial." Many news stories are the result of careful planning and internal construction, in order to satisfy organizational demands.[66] A good definition of "gatekeeper" then, would encompass both the micro and *macro* senses of the term. One such definition might be "any social institution, social context, activity or thing that has, as a consequence of its characteristics or behavior, the effect of modifying media content." [67] Media "gatekeepers" are both industry personnel and the myriad of rules, traditions and standards they adhere to.

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[63] Kurt Lewin, "Psychological Ecology" in Field Theory in Social Sciences Dorwin Cartwright, ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951).

[64] Walter Schramm, "The Gatekeeper, A Memorandum", in Mass Communications Walter Schramm, ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972) and David Manning White, "The Gatekeeper: a case study in the selection of news," in *Journalism Quarterly*, 27 (1950).

[65] Mark Schulman, "Control Mechanisms Inside the Media" in Media Power and Control (editors and publishing data required), p.116

"Agenda-setting" is the cumulative result of media gatekeeping, and grew as a theory out of that conception. Beginning in the late 1960s, researchers discovered that a strong correlation existed between the subjects awarded importance by media gatekeepers and the salience of those issues in the opinion of individuals in their audience. McCombs and Shaw monitored the citizens of Chapel Hill, NC during the 1968 U.S. presidential campaign, and found that the political problems regarded as most important by the voters were the very issues that had received the greatest media attention. The media, in effect, had been responsible -- for those voters among the test audience at least -- for determining the major issues of the campaign. McCombs and Shaw were the first to coin the phrase "agenda-setting" to describe the phenomena they observed, "the impact of the mass media -- the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking...[the] ability to mentally order and organize our world for us." "Agenda-setting", then, is concerned with the relationship between the media's message and the issue prioritizations demonstrated by the public. This study was followed by numerous others, all finding that a strong connection existed between public opinion and the media. Funkhouser, in examining public opinion during the 1960s, found that public concern over such subjects as the Vietnam War, student unrest, and urban crime closely followed the amount of media coverage devoted to those topics.[68] Mackuen and Coombs substantiated this discovery, by finding that public anxiety over civil rights and inflation closely reflected the attention paid to them by the national media.[69] A study focused on Madison, WI discovered that the conservative and liberal agendas of the city's two rival newspapers were mirrored by their respective readerships. The readers of the conservative paper shared the preoccupation of its "gatekeepers" with regard to America's world role and crime while those who read the more liberal paper were of the opinion that the Vietnam War and government corruption were more important causes for concern.[70] The 1976 U.S. Election Study documented similar evidence: the press had a significant impact in structuring the salience of certain issues for most in the study group.[71] And Iyengar, Peters and Kinder found that network television news programs had a powerful effect in structuring the personal issue agendas held by members of their test audience.[72] In a later work, Iyengar concluded that the media have the power to persuade individuals to alter their opinions, as when the news program favored certain policies or programs, support for them among viewers increased.[73] These various studies offer substantial evidence that the media exercise an agenda-setting influence. According to them, components of the societal agenda may often be placed there by the media. Researchers have seen public concern for various problems or issues fluctuate according to the level of interest the media inspires in them for those matters.

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[66] Denis McQuail, Mass Communication Theory - An Introduction, 2nd edition (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), p.163.

[67] Walter C. Soderlund, Walter I. Romanow, E. Donald Briggs, and Ronald H. Wagenberg, Media and Elections in Canada (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1984), p.33.

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[68] G.Ray Funkhouser, "The Issues of the Sixties: An Explanatory Study in the Dynamics of Public Opinion," in *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37 (Spring 1973), p.71.

[69] Cited in Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs," in *American Political Science Review* 76:4 (December 1982), p.849.

[70] Blumler and Gurevitch, p.250.

[71] Cited in David H. Weaver, "Media Agenda-Setting and Media Manipulation," in Mass Communication Research Yearbook 3 1982 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), p.542.

[72] Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, pp.852-853.

The possibility that the media merely mirror a preexisting public agenda has been disproved.[74] Even brief periods of exposure to media messages allowed members of the test audiences to absorb politically-relevant information, information that can have a dramatic effect on a person's construction of political reality. Clearly, the evidence for agenda-setting cannot be presented without qualification. The relationship between the amount of coverage an issue receives in the media and its importance to the public is not a direct one. A number of researchers noticed that the role of audience member in relation to the media message was not an entirely passive one. As in the "reinforcement" literature, characteristics such as the individual's type of employment and prior partisan affiliations have some impact on how he or she will receive the components of the media agenda.[75] The effectiveness of the media's agenda-setting power was also discovered to be a function of the level of information previously held by each audience member. The vulnerability of an individual to the phenomenon was found to depend on that person's ability to "counterargue", that is, to display an independent opinion on an issue or event regardless of its portrayal in the media. It was decided that the less informed are more susceptible to the influence of media agenda-setting, while the more knowledgeable are much less so.[76] The 1976 U.S. Election Study that David H. Weaver participated in made a similar discovery: the ability of the media to influence the issue prioritizations of their audience depended both on characteristics of that audience and on the issues involved. Higher educational and occupational levels seemed to blunt the impact of the media agenda, at least where issues were concerned, perhaps because voters with such characteristics would be more likely to have alternate means of obtaining information at their disposal. Significantly, Weaver noticed that the media's influence on the audience's issue prioritization was strongest when concerned with "unobtrusive" subjects -- those less likely to have a direct impact on the daily life of the average voter. The media's treatment of foreign relations, crime, government operations, energy policy and environmental matters had considerable effect. But on "obtrusive" issues -- those that audience members would likely have personal experience toward -- the agenda-setting influence was greatly diminished, "...suggest[ing] that personal experience is a more powerful teacher of issue salience than are the mass media when issues have a direct impact on voter's daily lives."[77] Doris A. Graber agrees. She notes that the potency of media effects varies with the issues involved: "...media guidance is most important for new issues beyond the realm of personal experience."[78]

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[73] Shanto Iyengar, Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.2.

[74] See Donald F. Roberts and Christine M. Bachen, "Mass Communication Effects," in Mass Communication Research Yearbook 3 1982 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), p.46. Citing several studies, the authors write, "time lagged correlated designs have been used to eliminate the possibility that the public is calling the shots." See also Becker, p.529, who concurs with this position.

[75] Black, p.3., and L. Erbing, E.N. Goldenberg and A.H. Miller, "Front Pages News and Real World Cues: A New Look at Agenda-Setting by the Media," in *American Politics Quarterly* 3 (July 1976), p.262.

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[76] Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, p.11.
[77] Weaver, pp.540-541.

In a contemporary Canadian context, if any subject might be classified as "unobtrusive" to most Canadians, it could be constitutional reform. A "distinct society" clause, a modified Senate, institutionalized self-government for aboriginal people, and proposals for a social charter and an economic union have little connection with the average citizen. Going by the above research, one would logically expect that the media's agenda-setting effect would be considerable with regard to this topic. Logically, such an academic subject such as Pierre Elliot Trudeau's criticisms of the proposed Canada Clause would be unlikely to strike a responsive chord with most Canadian citizens. Thus, the media's coverage and interpretation of his words would likely be more significant as determinators of a public response than on other issues. The relevance of the test case to this discussion, therefore, rests on its inherent "unobtrusiveness."

Priming

While agenda-setting concerns the influence of news coverage on the audience's perceptions of issue salience, "priming" refers to the effect of media messages on the construction of individual political judgment standards. Shanto Iyengar defined the concept as "the ability of news programs to affect the criteria by which individuals judge their political leaders."[79] The media's ability to highlight certain issues at the expense of others has been demonstrated to have the effect of imbuing widely publicized subjects with special political significance for members of the audience. These issues become important criteria of judgment with regard to the performance of governments and politicians. Media concentration on economic matters will mean that those in power will be judged by the public according to their ability to provide jobs, stabilize inflation, or decrease the deficit; a shift in media attention toward other subjects -- for example, foreign relations or environmental protection -- will result in a commensurate reconstruction of the criteria of political judgment. Research on judgment has found that people do not take all information and considerations into account when making a decision. Instead, we prefer to employ "intuitive shortcuts."[80] People organize their impressions of much of their environment around a few central themes, and utilize only the information about various subjects that is the most readily accessible, that comes most readily to mind. Hence, the more frequently the media focus public attention on a subject, the more likely it is that subject will be incorporated into the judgment standards of the audience member. The academic evidence for this idea -- "priming" -- is quite convincing. Krosnick and Kinder found that the subjects of U.S. support for the Nicaraguan Contras and U.S. involvement in Central America doubled in significance as determinants of President Reagan's personal popularity in the period immediately following the revelations that funds derived from the sale of arms to Iran had been used to finance the Contras.[81] Iyengar and Kinder discovered, when they exposed sample audiences to modified television newscasts that emphasized different subjects, such as national defense, inflation, and unemployment, afterward participants regarded those issues as important standards for political judgment.[82] These results correspond with the findings of earlier studies.[83]

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[78] Graber, p.134. See also Diana C. Mutz, "Mass Media and the Depoliticization of Personal Experience," in *American Journal of Political Science* 36:2 (May 1992), p.484.

[79] Iyengar, p.113.

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[80] Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, News That Matters (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.66.

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[81] Jon A. Krosnick and Donald R. Kinder, "Altering the Foundations of Support for the President Through Priming," in *American Political Science Review* 84:2 (June 1990), pp.497-512.

[82] Iyengar and Kinder, p.66.

[83] See Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, Donald R. Kinder and Jon A. Krosnick, "The Evening News and Presidential Evaluations," in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46 (1984), pp.778-787 and Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the Not-So-Minimal Political Consequences of Mass Media," in *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982), pp.848-858.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter One has been to illustrate that the media play an enormously significant role in the realm of politics and in society as a whole. The media effects literature provides substantial evidence of the veracity of two conceptualizations of the media's link with the public: "agenda-setting" and "priming". This evidence points to a strong connection in certain circumstances between the media's message and the information holding, issue prioritization, and judgment criteria of individuals in their audience. But media product is strongly influenced by a variety of factors implicit to the production process. It is possible that what members of the audience read, watch, or hear is substantially a function of the creative processes which developed it. The central hypothesis of this thesis is that a host of internal and external pressures not only affect what information is allowed through the media "gates", but it may substantially determine characteristics of the final news product passed on to consumers, and via that product, the public mind. Chapter Two will expand on the gatekeeping concept by detailing and discussing the various factors shaping media coverage, including economics, organizational imperatives, legal and political influences, and perspectives rooted in regional identity. It will be the purpose of the test case, which follows in Chapter Three, to discover if there is any evidence that gatekeeping "components" significantly influenced the media coverage awarded to Pierre Elliot Trudeau's speech on the Charlottetown Accord, and hence its public reception.

Chapter Two: Gatekeeping Explored - Factors That Shape Canadian Media Product

The media's message, and hence the agenda of issues put forth by each institution, is strongly influenced by a variety of "structural considerations". Media content is the product of a number of forces, ranging from economic and business influences, legal restrictions, the various strategies of media manipulation utilized by interested parties such as politicians, interest groups, and individuals with the express aim of engineering favorable treatment of their particular positions, and perspectives of regional identity. Each of these forces will be discussed in turn. Each prompts the media to "mediate reality" in a certain fashion. Conceptions of audience needs or wants are significant influences, perspectives which are rooted in market surveys. Journalists present reality in keeping with their provincial or regional position in relation to their subject. The advantages or disadvantages of a federal initiative as presented to the public may be decided for journalists by its likely impact at the local level. The significance of foreign events may be determined by Canadian self-interest. The media mediate reality in a certain fashion because the members of their various agencies interpret events in a particular way, and in accordance with a number of mitigating factors. The factors which have been identified as important in the Canadian context are legal influences, technological necessities, political strategies, economic constraints, occupational patterns, and environmental effects. These are discussed in turn in this chapter.

The Law

The media's product -- and hence the public's agenda -- is affected by limitations imposed by the courts, the technical imperatives characteristic to the medium employed and is influenced by various political strategies. The governments of some countries may impose significant restrictions on media operations in the defense of political ideologies or cultural aspects such as religion and traditional patterns of behavior. Such limitations have little relevance for the agencies of mass communication in the secular and capitalist western nations, but the press in many of these countries are affected by government initiatives nonetheless. While the mass media in the United States are largely sheltered by the substantial protections of press freedom under the Constitution, in Britain and Canada there exist significant limitations on press activities. Some areas of politics here have essentially been ruled out for reporters by the combination of the Official Secrets Act and libel laws. This has led to a certain amount of self-censorship on the part of journalists and news organizations. The examples of Doug Small and Bob Bierman[84] are notable in that they show that there are limits to journalistic expression in this country. In the light of those restrictions, reporters have been further tempted to rely on "managed" sources of news -- press conferences, government news releases, ministerial interviews --

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[84] Small, Ottawa Bureau Chief for Global Television, was charged with possession of stolen property after going public with details of the 1989 federal budget the day before it was brought down in the House of Commons. Biermann was the artist who drew the libelous *Victoria Times* cartoon which showed then-B.C. Human Resources Minister Bill Vander Zalm gleefully pulling the wings off flies. The minister filed suit for damages, and was awarded $3,500 and court costs, but the award was later overturned on appeal.

rather than pursue stories with energy and inventiveness on their own. Not only are these sources of news readily available, and require no particular effort to cover adequately, but are also safe as well. As a result, media "management" strategies have been given the opportunity to become ever more effective. However, legal requirements are not applicable across the board in terms of all media in a direct sense: there is limited external accountability for those agencies in the print medium, while their counterparts in the electronic realm are accountable to the C.R.T.C. for their coverage.

Legislation in other areas has impact on the press. The Kent Commission pointed out in 1981 that laws affecting copyrights, postal services, and telecommunications influence the media's ability to earn revenue and both compile and distribute information. And the operations of the parent corporations of media interests are affected by laws pertaining to monopoly, trading practices, advertising, taxation, and foreign investment.[85] The truth of this assertion was demonstrated by the impact of Bill C-58 (amending the Income Tax Act) in 1974. . In the wake of this legislation, the Canadian edition of *Time* ceased to exist, and *Maclean's* magazine underwent significant changes in format and content. Parliament also has the right to impose restrictions on press activities if warranted by a state of national emergency, as during the 1970 October Crisis. While the Charter of Rights and Freedoms offers some protection for media operations and content, enshrining as it does "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication", restrictions on those freedoms still exist. They must be exercised in the context of all existing and future "reasonable limits [as] proscribed by law." [86] Thus, while the First Amendment makes it virtually impossible for government to enact comprehensive legislation governing press activities in the United States, in Canada legislatures are allowed significantly more room to maneuver in this area. This is in keeping with the long Canadian tradition of government involvement in the realm of mass communications, versus that south of the border. Two recent examples of this fact are offered by the bans on publication imposed by the courts concerning the Karla Homolka murder trial and a lawsuit against the CBC by Vancouver stock promoter Robert Friedland.[87]

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[85] Cited in Desberats, p.155. It must be noted, however, that Canadian legislation pertaining to monopoly and trading practices is historically significantly weaker than laws in the United States; further, the decision of the Progressive Conservative government, elected in 1984, to dismantle the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA), eroded what protection for Canadian business against foreign domination that had been established under the auspices of that body.

In Canada-wide terms, Taras points out that certain norms and values are imposed on the media to a certain extent by the "cultural defenses" erected by Ottawa.[88] These include Canadian-content concerning radio and television broadcasting, as well as other legislation (such as Bill C-58) seemingly unrelated in a direct sense to the daily operations of news media, but having an impact on their product nonetheless.

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[86] Constitution Act, 1982, sections 2 (b) and 1.

[87] The Canadian media's reaction to these two highly controversial judicial decisions has been decidedly weak. The ban on publication of specific details of the Homolka trial remains in effect, and only foreign media have challenged it. Their product, though, has been intercepted by the authorities and prevented from reaching the Canadian market. The gag order imposed by the courts in the Friedland case was lifted after its purpose became unsustainable due to the efforts of the staff of *The Denver Post*. The paper ran a series of stories on Friedland's involvement in the ecologically-devastating Galactic mine project in Colorado and made the substance of these stories available to any Canadian who wanted to be informed of them. For a detailed chronology of the Friedland injunction, see Scott Honeyman, "Now it can be told: the story behind the story a judge blacked out," in *The Vancouver Sun*, Wednesday September 22, 1993, p.A4.

[88] Taras, p.22.

Technology

The demands and limitations of technology also affect the media's message. For each medium, the newsworthiness of a particular story is dependent on production values. As Reuven Frank put it, "the highest power of television journalism is not in the transmission of information but in the transmission of experience...joy, sorrow, shock, fear, these are the stuff of news."[89] All three mediums present their own imperatives with regard to what may be considered newsworthy. This is particularly significant with regard to the televised media. The majority of Canadians get their news from television, and consider its coverage to be the most trustworthy. Some argue that television as a medium is inherently unsuited to the imparting of information in a reasoned, comprehensive, fashion; its reliance on interest-evoking visual images places too much emphasis on entertainment. This position is contradicted by the quality and intelligence of such news programs as PBS's "MacNeil/Lehrer Report", ABC's "Nightline" and CBC's new "Prime Time News." It is true that a story that hinges on statistics is difficult to portray in an effective and interesting fashion on television. The simple, dramatic images required by television mitigate against some issues or events. But the difficulties faced by the medium in covering some areas of human experience are countered by its undoubted strengths in conveying information and images pertaining to others.

But what may make good television may make irresponsible journalism. Sensationalism has become a serious threat to journalistic integrity. Some media agencies -- particularly those in the televised realm -- will often devote disproportionate attention to some events if they offer attractive coverage characteristics. A sad example of this practice is the coverage given to the actions of a small group of anti-French protesters in Brockville, Ontario in September 1989. Members of the group were videotaped in the act of wiping their feet on the Quebec *fleur-de-lis*, an image that received near-saturation levels of coverage in the province's media during the bitter Meech Lake debate, greatly assisting the sovereignty option's surge in popularity in Quebec by the time the accord failed in June 1990.[90] In fact, the story was misreported, and the image -- which was useful to the media in that it offered a concrete illustration of public intolerance -- was itself misrepresented. The group was protesting changes to Ontario's bilingualism law, not the proposed package of constitutional amendments. It is essential that stories such as these, as attractive as they may be in a technical sense, be handled carefully. If they are likely to inflame prejudices and spark misunderstanding they must receive their proper due in terms of cautious, analytical reporting; unfortunately, often this does not happen. In the case of "tabloid" newspapers, emphasis is characteristically put on sensational events such as murders or accidents, while matters of a political or economic nature receive cursory attention. This trend has increasingly "infected" other media institutions too, as "all three major media tend to prefer the immediate, the personal and the concrete to long-term social processes or abstract ideas."[91]

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[89] Cited in Black, p.130.

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[90] "Brockville Finds Bigot Image Hard to Shake," in *The Vancouver Sun*, Wednesday October 7, 1992, p.A4. See also Romanow and Soderlund, p.311.

[91] Fletcher and Taras, p.222.

In the opinion of some authors, those who cite the importance of technical constraints -- in effect, blaming the nature of the medium -- for media content and coverage patterns, are in fact defending the decisions of the agencies operating within those mediums. Michael Parenti argues that this currently fashionable perspective allows decision makers as to news interpretation and format an escape, as it treats each medium as a "disembodied technical force all its own."[92] There is some substance to his thesis, for it is not the audio, visual or print mediums that demand sensationalized events or may only accommodate surface details, but rather those who operate media institutions. However, it is accurate to state -- in the McLuhan tradition -- that each medium imposes certain characteristic requirements on the product that it will carry. Television news places great emphasis on compelling visual material at the expense of actual, textual information. The print media cannot convey images as effectively, and must provide more comprehensive, detailed coverage of events. And radio news requires immediate, breaking stories in order to maximize its effectiveness. These imperatives all influence the news that news agencies in all three mediums convey to their audiences.

Politics

Politics is all about persuasion. The secret of political success lies in the effective communication and articulation of images and policies. To be elected, an individual politician or political party must be able to forge a bond with a significant percentage of the electorate on some psychological level, both in an individual and collective sense. The media both assist and hinder the politician's efforts to achieve this connection. By highlighting some issues and downplaying others, and by paying attention to certain personal characteristics will deeming others irrelevant, the media play an essential role in the creation of assessment criteria on the part of their audience members. Thus the real power in an election campaign -- the ability to determine the context in which it takes place, and the standards applied to its participants by the voters -- rests with the media. Their agencies provide an essential link between members of the general population and those they select to lead and represent their interests: without it social communication and democratic stability would suffer. But the consequences of media operations on politics and society are far-reaching, and have grown in overall significance in recent decades. The essential dilemma rests with the media's role in politics.

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[92] Parenti, p.9.

Are the media to perform an active or passive task? Are they mere reporters of events, or are they interpreters and influencers of popular beliefs, opinions, and assessments? In the nineteenth century the partisan press acted as a spokesperson for the parties, informing and mobilizing the electorate around distinct, opposing ideological viewpoints. The modern press has largely abandoned such a role, and instead has become an intermediary in the political process, a participating institution that colors and selects information in accordance with its own operating constraints. The role of journalism in the post-Watergate era has undergone a notable shift, then, from description -- merely providing an account of events -- toward prescription -- helping to set the national agenda, both during and between election campaigns by drawing the public's attention to those social issues worthy of political address and the personal attributes or shortcomings of political candidates that should influence their public assessment.[93] The balance of power has thus shifted away from elected officials or party organizations toward the press.

In politics, perception is reality. A good perception is essential if one is to be elected, if a government proposal is to receive widespread acceptance, if a segment of society is to receive legislative assistance. The institution of a partisan press used to allow the politicians of the Macdonald and Laurier era-- particularly those forming a government, with access to the national accounts -- to establish that perception. In the modern age, that is no longer the case. The media, acting for the sake of their own interests and in the light of often unclear conceptions of their audiences needs and wants with regard to content, now have that opportunity. This fact has given rise to the state of constant tension between members of the modern press and those of the political class: their relationship is based on manipulation, each attempting to use the other for their own end, each battling for control of the agenda and access to the public mind. The reporter requires usable, salable material in order to attract his or her audience; the politician requires favorable, particular coverage in order to forge a connection with the public, either in advancing a program or articulating a partisan viewpoint.

Politicians and interest groups try to manipulate the media agenda. They strive to highlight subjects or events that serve their interest while impeding the coverage of issues or perspectives that do not. They hope to tailor the coverage given to them and hence influence their public image. Governments and their opponents devote considerable resources -- both in terms of money and personnel -- in this pursuit. For example, a significant proportion of the staff of the Prime Minister's Office are responsible for media relations. Under a director of communications, the press secretary, speech writers, and a large support staff formulate an overall media strategy and attempt to satisfy the daily news requirements of the journalistic community in the capital.[94] Their efforts are mirrored by counterparts in the opposition parties, as well as personnel in a vast number of organizations outside elected office, all utilizing a variety of practices aimed at news manipulation. They schedule "good news" announcements when negative coverage seems likely, in the hope of distracting the media. They employ media advisors to assist them in creating the right political "image" for an occasion. Their "spin doctors" strive to give media coverage a favorable slant. A prime example of this practice occurred during the 1988 televised debates. While the party leaders argued, various partisan personalities circulated in the crowded press room, offering their opinions to reporters of their candidate's performance, hoping to favorably influence coverage.[95]

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[93] Sabato, p.61.

Politicians attempt to obstruct the investigations of journalists if they are probing into sensitive subjects, as happened during the controversy over the awarding of the 1992 federal advertising campaign celebrating national unity and Canada's 125th birthday. The contracts were granted without the required process of competitive bids to several companies with close ties to the Mulroney Progressive Conservatives. Both the government and those involved in the advertising industry set out to frustrate efforts on the part of the media to uncover the details of the matter.[96] Attempts to control media coverage can become more blatant if circumstances warrant, taking the form of legislative decision, as shown by President Nixon's reform of the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service,[97] threats of legal action against media agencies or their employees, or even an attack on an individual reporter's personal reputation. While a journalist who has filed favorable stories in the past may be rewarded by being given the opportunity for an exclusive interview, a reporter who has been too negative in his or her coverage, or too zealous in their investigation of certain matters, media subjects may be "burned" by their subject.[98] The goal of tailoring media coverage to suit a political strategy is made complicated due to the fact that the media severely limit the number of issues that will receive attention, and hence reach the public.

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[94] Taras, p.125.

[95] Gerald Caplan, Michael Kirby and Hugh Segal, Election: The Issues, The Strategies, The Aftermath (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1989), pp.281-282.

[96] See Chris Cobb and Mark Kennedy, "Feds keep tight lid on mystery around broken ad policies," in *The Vancouver Sun*, Saturday February 6, 1993. p.A5.

The most pervasive, and significant of the various techniques utilized to manipulate media coverage lies in the area of prepared information. Politicians and interest groups regularly provide journalists with pre-packaged story materials and photo opportunities -- referred to by those in the industry as "Gainesburgers" -- which, for reasons having as much to do with time and money as human nature, those in the industry find hard to resist. This material produces a desired result, in that the likelihood of investigative impulses on the part of journalists is diminished.[99] Political parties can control coverage by restricting the flow of information and the activities of their most prominent representative, their leader. In the 1974 election, the Liberals very successfully manipulated media coverage; by limiting their policy announcements, and by making them shortly before the filing deadlines of most media agencies, the party was able to get its message out to voters virtually "unmediated". The fairness convention forced tacit agreement with the Liberal strategy on the part of the media: with little more available to publish or broadcast than what the government provided them, the media were forced to go along with the party's strategy. During the 1993 election, aides for Jean Chrétien reportedly gave polling data to employees of *The Globe and Mail* , information that, when published by the paper, indicated that the Liberals and the Reform Party had greater support among the electorate than results presented the same day in Southam papers indicated. After it was revealed that the *Globe* published the data without first having established its accuracy, the paper was forced to print a retraction. The Toronto and Ottawa *Sun* newspapers, as well as Montreal radio station CKAC also publicized the same inaccurate figures and seat estimates that formed the basis of the *Globe* story, information all given to them by the Liberal leader's aides.[100] Polling data of questionable accuracy -- or even outright invention -- was given to reporters as a political strategy during both the 1990 election in Ontario and the 1989 Newfoundland campaign. The incumbent Ontario Liberals released numbers that showed Progressive Conservative leader Mike Harris trailing the Liberal candidate in his own riding, which was only partly so (the Liberals had a narrow lead in terms of preferred party, but Harris led his opponent personally).[101] The Newfoundland Liberals under Clyde Wells, hoping to create the appearance of momentum, invented a poll giving their party a 3.5 percentage advantage over the government (compared to real surveys, which showed the incumbent Conservatives leading by 6 to 11 points), and leaked it to reporters. In both instances, an "unsuspecting (and unsuspicious)" media relayed information to the public without having established its accuracy.[102]

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[97] Relations between the Nixon White House and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting -- which controlled public television in the United States -- were unfavorable, for reasons of dissimilar political philosophies. Nixon tried to remove various members from their positions in order to change the makeup of its leadership and pressured the service to alter its portrayal of his administration. Eventually, a certain degree of control over local programming was shifted away from Washington, producing -- to a degree at least -- the desired shift in coverage. Cited in Graber, p.30.

[98] This practice involves deliberately giving a reporter false information in the knowledge that it will be exposed as untrue when broadcast or published. Obviously, this can have devastating repercussions for the individual's professional standing. See Taras, p.127.

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[99] Michel Gratton, Brian Mulroney's former press secretary, has noted that journalists "are considerably more docile when well-nourished with material." Michel Gratton, So What Are the Boys Saying? (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1987), p.110.

[100] Joe Sinasac, "Globe admits it got wrong numbers on party standings," in *The Vancouver Sun*, p.A9.

And the agencies of mass communication may quite willingly follow the lead of the political parties, the incumbent in particular: several authors note that journalists effectively played along with the self-interests of all three parties in the 1988 election, by choosing to focus on the trade agreement, while completely excluding Meech Lake from national debate.[103] In 1979 the Trudeau Liberals wanted leadership to be the key issue of the campaign, and journalists perceived it to be the number one issue, and the issue receiving the most coverage, according to later research.[104] Thus the both campaigns were consciously manipulated by the governing parties to suit their own ends. The media's acquiescence in following the agendas of politicians may constitute a tacit agreement with their strategies of press manipulation.

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[101] John Laschinger and Geoffrey Stevens, Leaders and Lesser Mortals: Backroom Politics in Canada (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1992), p.78.

[102] Laschinger and Stevens, p.95

[103] Richard Johnston, Andre Blais, Henry E. Brady and Jean Crete. Letting the People Decide - Dynamics of a Canadian Election (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p.214. It is indeed possible to argue that issues related to Quebec's future within Confederation were well discussed during previous election campaigns, and that the very "newness" of the proposed Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement made it more newsworthy. However, there were several important reasons the Meech Lake Agreement should have received greater media attention: it had the potential to split the caucuses of both of the two opposition parties, the possibility of its failure (although in late 1988 that seemed far from likely) would have dire consequences for the country in terms of both politics and economics, and that the flaws in the accord had been well described by members of the intellectual community and by former prime minister Pierre Trudeau in his article in the *Toronto Star* and his presentation before the Senate. The utter absence of the Meech Lake Accord from the national agenda during the election illustrates that the media willingly cooperated with the leadership of the three main federal parties, who wanted the explosive issue of national unity kept quiet.

Economics

Economic considerations have a significant influence on the media's product. Over the last several decades, in many countries but particularly in Canada, there has been an increasing trend toward concentration in mass media ownership. At present, 77 percent of newspaper circulation in this country is controlled by four companies. Over 80 percent of radio stations are group-owned. Six companies control over 57 percent of cable-television subscriptions. And at least 90 percent of the total ad revenues earned by Canadian consumer magazines are shared by four major publishers.[105] There is now very extensive cross-ownership of the media in Canada; most of the major companies in the cultural sector have holdings in several media, often in the same community or region. Cross-ownership exists in nearly all major Canadian cities; only in Montreal and Toronto does real competition for market share between rival newspapers still occur.[106] As the Royal Commission on Newspapers reported in 1981, "newspaper competition is virtually dead in Canada."[107] There are now only 23 independent newspapers left in this country.[108] There is little doubt that such chain ownership has an effect -- one way or the other -- on media content. In the opinion of at least one prominent media insider, such ownership structures are inevitably "agents of homogenization."[109] And even more troubling is the continuing trend toward conglomeration in media ownership. As well as its media holdings, the huge Thomson empire owns several department store chains; Power Corporation has significant interests besides its publishing concerns; the Irving family own a wide variety of businesses, in addition to controlling most of the newspapers, radio stations and cable-television companies in Atlantic Canada. In many such conglomerates, the media holdings are far outweighed in financial significance by other business concerns.[110]

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[104] Gilsdorf, p.6.
[105] Ibid., p.78.
[106] Cited in Siegel, p.9.
[107] Royal Commission on Newspapers, *Report* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1981), p.217.

When discussing the role of economic factors in influencing media coverage, it is important to acknowledge a crucial debate with regard to news. It is alternatively considered a mere commodity and a public service. The latter position follows from the "social responsibility" position. Each perspective imposes its own system of qualification. If news is merely a commodity to be sold in the marketplace, the best news item is the one that attracts the most audience interest, and hence advertising revenues, and such considerations as its quality or its substance are irrelevant. Alternatively, if news coverage is deemed a social responsibility, the most significant news item is the feature that, by virtue of its honesty, comprehensiveness, and unbiased viewpoint, is of most benefit to society. If the agencies of mass communication are regarded purely as a business like any other, then profit must be their paramount, and indeed sole consideration. As Roy Thomson put it, "editorial content is the stuff you separate the ads with."[111] The publisher of the Wall Street Journal, W.P. Hamilton stated, "A newspaper is a private enterprise owing nothing whatever to the public which grants it no franchise. It is therefore affected with no public interest. It is emphatically the property of the owner, who is selling a manufactured product at his own risk."[112] Quebec publisher Pierre Péladeau agrees: "The name of the game is profit. If you don't make a profit, you don't have a newspaper."[113]

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[108] Keith Davey, "The Media Still Need Improvement," in Paul W. Fox and Graham White, eds., Politics: Canada, 7th edition (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1991), p.255.

[109] William Thorsell, editor of *The Globe and Mail*, cited in Desberats, p.61. Thorsell said of newspaper chains, "No matter how tolerant the common owner is of local autonomy, when you put a string of newspapers under one owner it's bound to reduce the individuality of member newspapers."

[110] Frederick J. Fletcher and Daphne Gottlieb, "The Mass Media and Politics: An Overview," in Canadian Politics in the 1980s, Second Edition eds. Michael S. Whittington and Glen Williams (Agincourt: Methuen Publishers, 1984), p.15.

For the modern agencies of mass communication, news is a commodity. It is selected and tailored in keeping with certain constraints, and sold as a consumer good just like any other item in the marketplace. The corporate empires that control most agencies of mass communication prefer stability and consensus to controversy because they create a better business climate. An activist role for the media -- at least in substantive terms -- is therefore frowned upon, for it is disruptive of just such an environment. But if the media's considerable impact on society -- in terms of structuring patterns of belief, and influencing value systems -- is to receive appropriate recognition, news cannot be regarded in this fashion.

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[111] Cited in Taras, p.12.

[112] Cited in Black, p.24.

[113] Cited in Vipond, p.73. The percentage of circulation control, interestingly, has been quite stable over the last decade; according to recent Canadian Daily Newspaper Association figures, the four largest companies (Southam, Thomson, the Toronto Sun Publishing Company and those companies classified as Independents, a category including the Toronto Star) continue to produce 76.3 percent of the 5.6 million newspapers sold daily in this country. See Chris Cobb, "The *real* power of the press" in *The Vancouver Sun*, March 31, 1993, p.A15.

In effect, the division lies between entertainment and information. To be realistic, it is impossible for the media to fully satisfy the criteria imposed by both the economic and social responsibility perspectives simultaneously in their news reporting; most agencies simply attempt to combine the qualifications imposed by the two to the best of their ability and within the bounds of their particular medium.

Economic considerations affect both content and perspective. Concerns for maximizing profit have an impact on journalistic integrity. Modern newspapers, whether independently or chain-owned now frequently rely -- for reasons of simple economics -- on common or organizational sources such as Canadian Press (CP), Associated Press (AP) or United Press International (UPI) for much of their news. Canadian television news often purchases American segments for financial reasons. The results of these practices have been often glaring biases in terms of world news coverage, and a subtle but pervasive homogenization of opinion. The Canadian media regularly offer better coverage of issues and events in the United States than at home, and devote attention to the developing world usually only in times of natural disaster or military takeover.[114] That the overwhelming majority of the media in the industrialized countries display similar biases and inadequacies with regard to Third World coverage has as much to do with their common sources as anything else. In the print medium, world news is dominated by four Western-based media organizations: U.S.-based AP and UPI, the British-based Reuters and the French *Agence France Press* (AFP). In the realm of electronic news, three Western agencies (Visnews, allied with Reuters; UPITN, affiliated with UPI; and CBS News) have virtually cornered the world market in terms of the distribution of news film and video footage.[115]

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[114] "Widespread Use of U.S. Media Coverage on Asian Affairs Questioned in Study" in The Vancouver Sun, August 7, 1992, p.B2. This story is concerned with a study commissioned by the Asia Pacific Foundation; among its findings is that the the Canadian media relies heavily on foreign news sources, mainly U.S., for coverage of political and business issues in Asia. See also Peter Dahlgren with Sumitra Chakrapani, "The Third World on TV News: Western Ways of Seeing the 'Other'", in William C. Adams, ed., Television Coverage of International Affairs (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1982), pp.45-63; and John R. Walker, "Canadian Press Coverage of Arms Control and Disarmament Issues," in Points of View No.3 (Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, 1987).

The success of public affairs broadcasting is more often assessed in terms of its daring and audience generation as opposed to the information it volunteers.[116] Popular "news" shows such as CBS's "60 Minutes" frequently present a less than comprehensive portrayal of facts, events or issues -- to make a story appear dramatic and unequivocal -- in order to appeal to a target viewership.[117] All media concerns -- with the exception of the publicly-owned, which face their own restrictions -- are controlled by the market. Advertisers are purchasing access to an audience. Advertising revenues account for 78 percent of newspaper income, and nearly all the revenue generated by television and radio stations.[118] In the interests of attracting that revenue, public affairs broadcasting has become increasingly bland, or "soft", engineered to appeal to the widest possible audience. Increasingly, news is becoming the advertisement for the real ads.

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[115] Robert A. Hackett, "Coups, Earthquakes and Hostages? Foreign News on Canadian Television," in Canadian Journal of Political Science 22:4 (December 1989), p.810. Hackett notes that the strength of the four major organizations lies in their extensive newsgathering networks made up of innumerable part-time "stringers" and exchange agreements with the national news agencies of many countries; these allow AP, UPI, Reuters and AFP to offer their subscribers both relatively "objective" information as well as "the benefits of economies of scale." Such arrangements encourage standarized thinking and reporting, and tend to discourage perspectives that do not conform to such patterns, however.

[116] Black, p.223.

[117] One of the most glaring examples of the irresponsible brand of journalism common to such "news" programs and the fallout from their product involved the "sudden-acceleration" accusations leveled against the Audi 5000 luxury sedan. These cars were supposedly prone to suddenly accelerate, without warning, and could not be stopped by brake application. A segment on the program "60 Minutes" apparently substantiated this phenomenon, attracting widespread publicity in the process. This had a devastating effect on the manufacturer's overall sales and caused an enormous diminishment in the resale value of its flagship model. Later it was revealed that the car tested by CBS had been mechanically tampered with (air was forced into its transmission under enormous pressure) in order to achieve the desired effect for the cameras. Further, the program did not mention any of the mitigating factors that may have caused a number of the accidents, such as the height of the drivers, their familiarity with the controls of the car, their choice of footwear, or the placement of the accelerator and brake pedals in the 5000 model.

Newspapers have undergone marked transformations in terms of format and particularly editorial perspective, in order to attract a larger or select -- and hence, more profitable, readership. A prime example of this phenomenon occurred several years ago at *The Globe and Mail,* when the publisher gave editor Roy Megarry the authority to make sweeping changes in the newsroom of the paper in order to make it more appealing to an upscale, business-oriented readership.[119] This trend has led to a narrowing of perspective, and limits on the news to be covered and views to be expressed by papers.[120] David Taras points out that the owners of media institutions wield power subtly and indirectly, chiefly through their hiring practices.[121] An owner with a conservative political ideology is almost certain to hire management personnel with compatible beliefs -- and those individuals, in turn, are much more likely to hire journalists sympathetic to their perspective, and those above them, as well. Thus a "trickle-down" effect can occur in an agency of mass communication, which inevitably has a profound impact on the information selected as its content.

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[118] Siegel, p.8.

[119] Taras, p.12.

[120] See Romanow and Soderlund, pp.271-278, for an overview of this entire issue.

[121] Taras, p.14. See also Desberats, p.70; and Ben Bagdikian's The Media Monopoly (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983). Bagdikian wrote, "It is a rare corporation, that appoints a leader considered unsympathetic to the desires of the corporation....No one who has been close to newspapers can doubt that in fact the power exercised by a chain, shaping the editorial content of its newspapers, is pervasive. Head office appoints the publishers, who appoint everyone else. They control budgets and, in some cases, control expenditures in fine detail. They operate with a string of interchangeable publishers and understood administrative norms. To suggest that they foster editorial independence is, as is said in French, to dream in color."

The rise in corporate ownership in mass communications has prompted quite legitimate concerns about media integrity. As noted by Qualter, the integration of news institutions into larger economic organizations virtually ensures a blurring of the boundaries that should separate the two. It is certain that the media will become, for the most part, cooperative with and supportive of the concerns and perspectives of their economic parents and, even more significantly, the political organizations that champion their interests.[122] Michael Parenti points out that the media -- through their ownership -- are now linked with select groups in a society: with powerful business organizations, as opposed to public interest groups; with management, instead of organized labor; with establishment think tanks and charity groups, not with their grassroots rivals.[123] With such an integration of media interests with the corporate world, the arms-length relationship that should exist between them, as the arbiters of public information, and the other privileged and powerful groups in society is broken down. All this has impact on news selection and presentation. Several glaring examples of this reality occurred during the last two federal election campaigns. In 1988, an editorial in *The Ottawa Citizen* supported the Liberal's housing policy; the paper's management disagreed, and later the same day the editorial turned against the party.[124] Reporters at *The Globe and Mail* were informed that the paper was 'not interested' in stories that reflected badly on free trade, such as the plant closing at Fleck, Ontario.[125] Over the course of the 1988 campaign, journalists complained amongst themselves about the increasingly heavy, and stifling hand exercised by their editors in terms of story selection and coverage angle. And two front-page photographs of Liberal leader John Turner during the 1984 campaign seemed to betray a disturbing pro-Progressive Conservative bias on the part of the management of Canada's supposed national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail.*[126] It is arguable that the two photographs -- one on the eve of the campaign, the other just days before its end -- reflected bias on the part of the newspaper's management against the federal Liberals. The first photograph depicted a jovial Turner announcing the date of the upcoming election, and jokingly toasting reporters with a glass of water. The second is the now infamous "horns" picture, which showed a now desperate Liberal leader -- his face contorted with a scowl -- speaking at a public rally. The angle of the photo appeared to make the upturned forks on the banner behind him grow out of his head. Neither photo is at all flattering, and neither assisted Turner nor his party in their efforts to salvage his rapidly diminishing stature in the eyes of the public.

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[122] Qualter, p.143. Another prominent example of a newspaper directing its staff to handle a certain story in a particular way occurred in 1980 at *The Montreal Gazette*. In a now infamous leaked memo, senior management directed reporters to tailor their coverage of the Referendum campaign, in keeping with the position of the vast majority of the paper's readership on the question of Quebec sovereignty-association. On the subject of media cooperation with, and support for particular political organizations, several glaring examples of this fact have occured over the last few years. During the 1988 election and 1992 referendum, media endorsement -- both at the editorial and individual story levels -- of the Progressive Conservatives was overwhelming. In more general terms, the media is far more likely to approve of, and endorse the candidacies of free enterprise organizations than social-democratic ones.

[123] Parenti, p.29.

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[124] Rick Salutin, Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal (Markham: Viking, 1989), pp.238-239.

[125] Ibid., pp.248-249. Peter Desberats provides other examples of news-manipulation: a business reporter was dissuaded from researching what seemed to be a case of illegal stock trading because his paper wanted positive business stories; another journalist related how a consumer report he had written was deleted after a major advertiser complained one its products had been given a negative review. See Desberats, p.100.

[126] See Mary Anne Comber and Robert S. Mayne, The Newsmongers - How the Media Distort the Political News (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986) for an extensive discussion of this controversy.

The demands imposed by the marketplace and by industry competition exact their own restraints on the information product. Advertisers flee from controversy and divisiveness; those programs that prompt such reactions from the viewing, reading or listening audience are, therefore, to be avoided; such self-censorship on the part of the media reflects only good business sense. Except for those media that are publicly owned -- and even they are not immune to such pressure -- the majority of the agencies of mass communication must, by necessity, sell their audience to advertisers. Thus, they compete among themselves for the maximum "entertainment value" in news programming, knowing that in such a strategy lies economic reward. Frank Stanton, president of CBS, has admitted that the wishes of advertisers are very significant in determining media content: "Since we are advertiser-supported we must take into account the general objectives and desires of advertisers as a whole."[127] NBC News recently discovered how significant advertiser-demands can be. In response to the revelation that NBC employees had rigged test crashes of GM pickup trucks for a news item on vehicle safety -- concealing remote controlled incendiary devices underneath test vehicles to ensure that they would burst into dramatic and satisfying flames in a collision -- an outraged General Motors sued NBC for defamation and withdrew all its advertising from the network. The chastened network soon admitted its guilt in the fraudulent story, and paid the manufacturer a substantial settlement.[128]

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[127] Cited in Parenti, p.48.

The importance of advertising revenue to modern newspapers mean that "[they] make a lot more money selling their readers to advertisers than by selling information to readers."[129] Thus the interests of the public and those of the media may be quite dissimilar. Of course, in a sense this is nothing new: the media have always identified with causes other than the public good. The media and the establishment have always had shared interests. In the era of Macdonald and Laurier, the press was blatantly partisan, each newspaper little more than a political organ, utterly devoted to the policies and personalities of its ideological parent, and as reliant upon patronage for continued survival as they are on advertising revenue today.[130] But the essential difference between the media of that time and those of the present lies in the perception of their public: before, it was always clearly and loudly obvious to the consumer as to the priorities of the owners of a media institution. A conservative paper was a Conservative paper. Now that identification is much less obvious, cloaked in the myth of journalistic objectivity. On the whole those associated with the industry continue to proclaim their profession's integrity, but there are exceptions. The outspoken Roy Megarry, publisher of *The Globe and Mail,* has predicted that "by 1990, publishers of mass circulation daily newspapers will finally stop kidding themselves that they are in the newspaper business and admit that they are primarily in the business of carrying advertising messages."[131]

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[128] As detailed in an article by Howard Rosenberg of the Los Angeles Times, this was not the first time that NBC News has found itself in hot water due to questionable journalistic and ethical practices. NBC was one of the few media organizations to publically name the alleged rape victim of William Kennedy Smith; the network cancelled anti-nuclear crusader Dr. Helen Caldicott's appearance on "The Today Show" after her new book was discovered to criticize NBC's corporate parent, General Electric; and NBC was the only U.S. network to air footage showing the murder of a Florida woman by her former husband, video also shown by BCTV in Canada. See Howard Rosenberg, "Peacock Plucked," in The Vancouver Sun, February 15, 1993, p.C3. These incidents may be part of an industry-wide trend -- itself the result of industry competition for increased audience share – as much as the particular policies of the NBC network or the ex-president of its news division, Michael Gartner, who announced his resignation on March 2, in the wake of the crash scandal.

[129] Comber and Mayne, pp.24-25.

[130] Arthur Siegel, Politics and the Media in Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983), pp.93-94.

Conceptions of the audience are also important influences on media product. According to the "audience model" of news selection, information is chosen and formatted in a particular fashion to satisfy the demands of its destined market. Because audience surveys have shown that the average citizen prefers the lighter, more entertainment-oriented "infotainment", most media institutions have largely abandoned "hard" news. Increasingly, what has become the norm has been described as "disco journalism."[132] David Taras notes that the essential problem with such "tabloid" reporting is that it inevitably distorts the news: information is shaping according to an entirely artificial standard of entertainment characteristics.[133] Hence, events in the media -- unlike those in the real world -- are short in duration, and lack complexity. Appealing to perceptions of audience demands becomes paramount, rather than covering issues comprehensively and accurately conveying information. The majority of media institutions assume that their subscribers want news that is quick to digest; their coverage is shaped accordingly. There is some substance to this conclusion -- market surveys and audience percentages have shown that most people prefer the simpler, shorter, and more dramatic news offered by the major media institutions both in the electronic and print realms, as opposed to their competitors offering more specialized and in-depth coverage.[134] One result of these discoveries is that the line between newspaper and magazine in Canada has become increasingly blurred; a significant proportion of investigative and analytical reporting is now left to television and radio.

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[131] Cited in Desberats, p.70.

[132] Cited in Gordon Fisher, "Does the Concentration of Ownership Hurt Political Reporting?" in The Reader's Digest Foundation of Canada, Politics and the Media (Toronto: Reader's Digest Foundation of Canada and Erindale College, University of Toronto, 1981), p.89.

[133] Taras, p.19.

In accordance with strategies aimed at increasing their market share, the institutions of the print medium have largely abandoned their responsibilities to cover the news in depth. Instead, they have responded to the challenge leveled by the electronic news media by incorporating certain of their characteristics of journalism in their own product. As a result of market research, many papers have adopted the "tab" format, replete with numerous photographs, some in color, shorter, more simplistic stories focused on crime, hardship and strange events, and simple, computer-generated graphics. The successful national daily *USA Today* is even sold in boxes resembling televisions. That patterns of coverage have been altered in accordance to audience surveys is a divisive issue among those in the industry. Some defend the shift in priorities away from hard new to a more entertainment-oriented journalism, stating that it merely more accurately serves the needs of the community. Others attack such "People Magazine Journalism", regarding the changes on journalistic practice required by the model as corrupt and ultimately self-destructive.[135] The side one chooses in such a debate is a function of whether media product is regarded as simply an economic commodity or a social responsibility. On the subject of audience constraints, then, it is sufficient to note that conceptions of the needs and wants of the majority of a targeted audience are significant in affecting media content and perspective. Appealing to that market will determine what news is covered, and how it is interpreted, a trend of particular significance to the politics of this country. Conceptions of the audience -- specifically, notions regard what its members desire in news coverage -- is an enormously important determinant of media behavior.

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[134] Graber, p.145

[135] For an example of this debate between those within the industry, see Fisher, pp.88-90.

Occupation

Occupational patterns further influence the substance of the media's message. Besides the legal, technical, political and economic influences on media product, the personal perspectives and the role perceptions held by media personal are themselves crucial determinants of what issues are selected to form the substance of the public agenda. One author has termed this the "organizational model"[136] of news selection and presentation: information is contextualized, formatted and presented in keeping with the norms and structures of the media institution involved, and those standards effect the perspectives of its employees. In other words, and to borrow from McLuhan, the agency of mass communication is the message. Professional imperatives may be the most significant determinant of media messages. Studies have demonstrated that media institutions frequently take their cues -- as to what constitutes a legitimate news story, or what is the best angle of coverage -- from one another. This fact has given rise to the term "pack journalism", wherein reporters take a common perspective as to a news event, and almost completely ignore all other aspects of the story, or consider that other opinions might have validity. "Pack journalism" is both the result of the fierce competition between media agencies for market share and hence advertising profits, and is also a way to circumvent the frequently lengthy process of information gathering. If journalists can effectively decide, as a group, what the most important story of the moment is, then individual reporters do not have to spend time searching for significant events or issues, or developing alternate interpretations of those subjects. The Kent Commission derided this "circular absurdity... [wherein] print journalists in Ottawa [follow] on the heels of broadcast journalists, with editors in TV newsrooms using newspapers as a guide to newscast lineups."[137] Michael Parenti has noted that this trend has a disturbing consequence: it usually shapes all subsequent reporting of the event, personality, or even issue.[138] This has led in certain circumstances to what one author termed "lowest-common-denominator journalism", wherein competing media institutions are quite willing to follow a leader in broadcasting or printing a story -- however questionable its documentation.

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[136] Taras, p.19.

Once one media agency puts its stamp of approval on the substance of a story, it acquires a legitimacy across the board, and often receives no further verification.[139] Gilsdorf has documented that "pack journalism" exists in modern journalism in a variety of forms: in the mirroring of the "leads" of the wire services or competing media, in the sharing of significant quotes, in the development of collective themes in reportage, and a common focus on the same issues or events, while awarding almost complete inattention to others.[140] Media agencies and employees in different and competing mediums also influence the actions of their counterparts in others. The coverage decisions of those in the print medium influence what receives attention by the electronic media. Certain famous and experienced reporters and columnists -- particularly the senior members of the parliamentary press gallery -- are said to be particularly influential in terms of deciding leads, justifying tone, and defining topics for journalists across the country. In this country, the preeminent example of this "influence" phenomenon -- the coverage decisions of one media institution affecting the priorities of its competitors -- is *The Globe and Mail.* The newspaper is widely acknowledged as the industry's indicator of what topics constitute the news of the day. The paper's coverage choices affect the assignments, news interpretation and editorial decisions of other media institutions.[141] The enormous cost of covering the news may itself be a powerful impetus toward pack journalism. By 1988 the

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[137] Royal Commission on Newspapers, Report (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1981), p.143.

[138] Perhaps the most glaring, and saddest example of the pack phenomenon in Canadian politics occurred in 1979 with regard to then-Opposition leader Joe Clark's South Asian tour. The misfortunes suffered by the new PC leader on this trip -- among them the infamous lost luggage -- were the subject of endless discussion and ridicule in the media, and did -- it seemed for years -- irreparable damage to his public image.

[139] Sabato, p.58. In Canada, the paramount example of this trend is the so-called "Mansbridge Report" during the 1988 election. On the basis of very little evidence, the CBC decide to proceed with this story, accusing four high-level Liberal insiders of plotting to remove the faltering John Turner as party leader in mid-campaign. As the

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news of the alleged -- and now supposedly abortive -- coup was subsequently covered by other media agencies, the basis of the original story -- itself a creation of little more than gossip and innuendo -- was taken as a given by other agencies, and became steadily more distorted and fantastic with each telling. For a fascinating account of this event, and the controversy it sparked within the industry afterward, see Robert Mason Lee, One Hundred Monkeys - The Triumph of Popular Wisdom in Canadian Politics (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1989), pp.158-171.

[140] William O. Gilsdorf, "Paper presented to the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing," (unpublished), p.7.

[141] William O. Gilsdorf and Robert Bernier, "Journalistic Practice in Covering Federal Election Campaigns in Canada," in Reporting the Campaign - Election Coverage in Canada ed. Frederick J. Fletcher Volume 22 of the research studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Ottawa and Toronto: Minister of Supply and Services Canada/Dundurn Press, 1991), p.29.

cost of covering all three leaders' tours during a national election campaign had risen to more than $100,000, meaning that only the wealthiest media institutions could afford to send their representatives along with the party leaders.[142] Many smaller news agencies are thus forced to base their election coverage -- at least in significant part -- on second-hand news: interpreting and reformatting the information provided them by the big players in the industry.

The "herd instinct" is quite obvious during elections, when the media create stereotypes to structure their coverage over the course of the campaign. Announcements, events and personalities are portrayed in accordance with these interpretative frameworks, which have a great overall impact on the public's view of them and their electoral relevance. A coverage "theme" often becomes apparent during election campaigns, as the media structure their coverage around a core assumption, such as the Trudeau "deathwatch", the Clark "circus", the Turner "tragedy", the Mulroney "machine". Such themes color public deliberation and final decision.[143] As noted by Gilsdorf and Bernier, such "tried and true narrative themes" may cause the media to "develop blind spots with respect to 'unusual developments' in 'unusual campaigns.'"[144] A prime example is the media's overwhelming focus on the proposed Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to the exclusion of other subjects (such as the Meech Lake Accord, or the Mulroney government's Value Added Tax) meant that the outcome of the election would be determined by where the three major parties stood on that issue.

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[142] Taras, p.161.
[143] Gilsdorf, p.5.
[144] Gilsdorf and Bernier, pp.5-6.

Further, the substance of media coverage at certain times is overwhelmingly dictated by the needs of television. Print journalists have admitted that for fast developing stories such as leadership conventions and non-election events such as Meech Lake, television coverage frequently serves as a primary source.[145] During elections, much of the substance of each party's campaign -- platforms, perspectives, and geographical scheduling -- is expressly designed for television. The coverage of news agencies in print or on the radio often becomes captive of this fact. This is problematic because the simple, dramatic statements and strong, clear visual cues demanded for effective television coverage sometimes make the task of providing comprehensive information inherently difficult for agencies in other mediums. According to the technical imperatives detailed earlier in this chapter, it is likely that certain political events or developments will not become leading news items on television. Unless dramatic or exciting visual material accompanies these subjects or is otherwise readily available, they will be passed over in favor of others.[146] The pervasive influence exercised by television news over the coverage decisions of its competitors in radio and print agencies means that unless certain stories acquire television's "stamp of approval", they will not attract much attention overall. Common patterns in news coverage between media institutions may stem from a strong consensus among those in the industry as to what is newsworthy and hence should receive media attention -- this agreement is based substantially on notions of what the audience would find pleasing.[147] Criteria of event or issue selection are significant too: as Comber and Mayne found, the paramount measurement of whether something is newsworthy is its newness.[148] As another author put it, news occurs in the "continuous present tense."[149] Today's events are important; yesterday's are irrelevant. This constant pursuit of the immediate has meant that long-term problems -- such as homelessness, unemployment, environmental deterioration and racial or ethnic discrimination -- that would require more in-depth investigation for their effective reporting are either ignored or receive cursory attention. Such a pattern of issue selection on the part of the media has enormous importance, as it impacts on the public agenda.

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[145] Gilsdorf and Bernier, p.29.

[146] Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek, and Janet Chan, Visualizing Deviance: A Study of News Organizations (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p.280. After closely studying the operations of Toronto's CBC station CBLT, the authors wrote, "The importance of visuals was revealed when there were problems obtaining them. If particular visuals could not be obtained, or if obtained were deemed to be lacking in drama, immediacy or exclusivity, then the entire story was dropped." David Taras notes that South Africa no longer ranked as a lead story on television newscasts after the government outlawed filming riots and demonstrations in 1986, but returned to the top of newscasts after journalistic access was restored in late 1989. See David Taras, The Newsmakers: The Media's Influence on Canadian Politics (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), p.109.

The vast majority of news stories have -- for one reason or another -- a select and particular origin: most are based on institutionalized sources.[150] Such sources include official briefings, press releases and news conferences, and planned media events, all expressly designed to manipulate the media's portrait of events, and hence the public agenda.

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[147] Graber, p.152.

[148] Comber and Mayne, p.97. See also Graber, p149.

[149] Michael Schudson, "Deadlines, Datelines and History," in Reading the News eds. Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p.89.

[150] There is considerable evidence to support this assertion: one study of 2,850 stories in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* found that 78 percent were based largely on the statements of public officials. Another survey had similar results: of nearly 1,200 newspaper stories, 58 percent originated through "routine bureaucratic channels"; only 25 percent could be seen as the product of investigative effort on the part of journalists. See Parenti, p.51; and Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company, 1982), p.12.

Just like any other profession, the norms of journalism become routine for those who are employed in the industry: over time, and when burdened with the pressures of time and the shrinking financial resources of their employers, most become unwilling to go beyond the usual sources to investigate new developments, or get fresh perspectives on an issue. Established sources are readily accessible and available, and most media institutions require their representatives to cover them. Hence it becomes nearly impossible to effectively cover issues in a truly national sense in Canada. It is little wonder that the nation's capital has been described as an "echo chamber", wherein the same people are always being interviewed, each reacting to the quotes and opinions of the others.[151]

That reality of Ottawa is also present in Canada in a geo-political context as well: the issues, events and personalities of the Ottawa-Toronto-Montreal triangle receive far more than their share of national media attention, over what matters to residents of the West, the North, or the Atlantic regions. The Committee of Inquiry into the National Broadcasting Service criticized this reality.[152] One important reason for this pattern of news coverage is the simple reality that most, if not all, of those agencies of mass communication that constitute the "national media" in this country are headquartered there. Where the clear majority of journalists are stationed -- at established, institutionalized listening posts, such as the House of Commons, the provincial capitals, and major cities such as Montreal and Vancouver -- has influence on the substance of their coverage. The reporting of the 1988 election campaign made that obvious: despite the emergence of a substantial anti-free trade movement at the grassroots level of Canadian politics over the course of the campaign, this development on the whole received little media attention. Rick Salutin attributes this to the media's "fixed" position: political, social, and economic stories occurring outside the standardized framework of parliament are thus overlooked.[153]

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[151] Taras, p.105.
[152] Osler, p.109.

The standard "fairness" convention in the industry is also an important issue in this area. It is clearly a double-edged sword in the sense that it is helpful to some while hurtful toward others. This convention does not require that competing candidates are discussed along matching dimensions, or that competing groups get equal or proportionate time, space and placement.[154] Rather, the media aim for rough parity in their amount of coverage, and rough equality between negative and positive stories, which has obvious impact on coverage; the most significant effect these norms of coverage have is the prominence of third parties and so-called fringe candidates. Indeed, the continuation of a relatively healthy multi-party political system at both levels of government in this country, as at the national level in the United Kingdom, is at least partially attributable to patterns of media coverage -- the fact that representatives of the minor parties are accorded equal media time to respond to government initiatives and performance as are their counterparts in the Official Opposition party has served to increase their public stature.

An important influence on media coverage is reporter-source relations. To maintain a good -- read, profitable -- relationship, a reporter may protect the dignity of a source by editing news coverage, overlooking potentially embarrassing quotes or agreeing to reshoot material destined for broadcast.[155] Reporters find that maintaining a favorable relationship with prominent sources is virtually essential if they are to effectively satisfy the demands of their employers: those journalists who step outside the protection offered by the "pack", and become too aggressive in their questions or too dedicated in their pursuit of a damaging story risk becoming frozen out of the process. Requests for interviews with prominent government ministers will be either refused or go unanswered; their questions at news "scrums" will be ignored. A prominent example of this pattern of ostracism, which can have a devastating impact on an individual journalist's self-esteem and professional standing, is offered by the experiences of the CBC's Wendy Mesley during the 1988 campaign.[156] To protect themselves, then, reporters will tailor their coverage accordingly; this, in turn, will narrow the bounds of legitimate debate in the public realm. Hence, reporters may -- to maintain good source relations -- give attention to certain announcements or ceremonies that are of debatable public importance for the simple reason that it is in their long-term professional interest to do so.[157] And the connection between certain politicians and members of the press is sometimes closer than it appears. Former British Columbia Attorney General Bud Smith tried to make CKVU television reporter Margot Sinclair -- with whom he was having an extra-marital affair -- a participant in his efforts to impede the criminal prosecution of a political colleague. When their conversation about lawyer Peter Firestone was illegally taped, and then released to the media and the Opposition, it cost them both their jobs.[158] Other prominent examples of unethical ties between politicians and members of the press include Bruce Hutchison's 1957 interview with Liberal leader Lester Pearson (they prepared the questions together and rehearsed the interview before taping it), and the payoffs given to reporters in exchange for filing favorable stories about the government of Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis.[159]

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[153] Salutin, p.28.
[154] Graber, p.163.

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[155] Ericson, Baranek and Chan, p.203.

[156] Feeling that Mesley's coverage of the prime minister had been too critical, the Progressive Conservatives tried to pressure the CBC to withdraw her from the Mulroney tour. Failing that, they went to great lengths to make her feel unwelcome and impede her efforts to do her job. See Taras, p.159. Peter Desberats offers another example. Pierre Laporte, the Quebec cabinet minister murdered by the FLQ, was once a political journalist on the staff of *Le Devoir*. Premier Maurice Duplessis publically identifed Laporte as an enemy of his government, and barred him from attending press conferences. Cited in Desperats, p.118.

[157] Ericson, Baranek and Chan, p.203.

The state of the relationship between members of the press and a political organization may also influence its coverage in the media. The poisonous relationship between the Liberal Party and journalists after nearly 16 years of Pierre Trudeau's leadership may have contributed to the party's decidedly negative portrayal in the media and its subsequent decimation at the polls in 1984. Unpleasant relations between the Mulroney Progressive Conservatives and the media since their election in 1984 may have in the end caused them to pay a high price nearly a decade later. Prime Minister Kim Campbell's statement during the 1993 campaign that elections were not the time to discuss serious issues prompted an immediate and damning media reaction. She was branded pompous, elitist, and pessimistic. But when Liberal leader Jean Chrétien said, "Let me win the election and after that, you come and ask me questions about how I run the government," words that might have legitimately prompted accusations of arrogance, indifference and evasiveness, there was little outcry on the part of journalists. The harsh media scrutiny of the

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[158] Graham Leslie, Breach of Promise: Socred Ethics Under Vander Zalm (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1991), pp.137-139.
[159] Taras, p.47.

Progressive Conservative campaign, as compared to the largely favorable coverage attracted by the Liberals is attributable to that party's highly organized and well equipped national leader's tour. The lavish facilities made available to journalists on the Liberal campaign, the accessibility and warmth of the leader, and the friendliness and competence of his party workers were in marked contrast to the spartan media facilities, the inaccessible and surly leader, and the hostile and uncooperative staff on the Campbell tour. The negative journalistic assessment of the Tories, their platform and their leader may have thus been rooted -- at least in part -- in the mutual antipathy between members of the media and those of the party. As Chris Cobb of *The Ottawa Citizen* wrote, "few journalists who have had regular contact with the Tories during the past nine years will be sorry to see them gone. This isn't sabotage, it's human nature."[160]

Coverage may also be affected by the accessibility of political candidates or government ministers to reporters, or personal appeal of certain individuals to a given market or audience, and particular characteristics of parties or their representatives. For example, the charismatic often attract more journalistic attention than the less appealing; the incumbent often gets more media attention -- for simple reason of his/her, or their -- official position compared to the relative lack of such prominence on the part of their political opponents. A party's standings in the polls also effects the coverage awarded to it and its representatives by the media; policy announcements and election promises will often be framed -- negatively or positively -- according to a measurement of public opinion of questionable accuracy. The platforms of the mainstream parties will receive wide publicity, while those belonging to organizations on the political margins will attract little journalistic interest. This is a function of opinion polling, whose results are not covered in isolation, and have a pervasive effect on coverage as a whole.

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[160] Chris Cobb, "Media serves up the leaders: One hot - the other cold," in *The Vancouver Sun,* October 21, 1993, p.A1.

Finally, the role perceptions held by journalists are perhaps the most important "occupational constraint" on news selection and interpretation and hence the substance of the public agenda. At a macro level, these perceptions are rooted in the conflicting demands imposed by the economic and social responsibility "models" of journalism. To reiterate, according to the former, the overriding objective of any media institution -- barring those of the public realm -- is audience generation. Anything that agency publishes or airs is permissible -- within the bounds of community standards, of course -- so long as it draws a larger audience share and produces a steadily increasing profit margin. According to the social responsibility viewpoint, all media have a moral responsibility to publish or broadcast significant political, economic, and social news; in other words, they must live up to their responsibilities as essential components of the democratic system. From the economic point of view, such a responsibility does not exist, or is vastly subordinate to the balance sheet at best. On the individual level, this dichotomy manifests itself as a debate over roles: the journalist as businessperson versus the journalist as public advocate. The demand of audience-generation conflicts with the desire of audience-education.

Journalists frequently regard their role as "societal watchdogs" and adversaries of politicians, feeling that good reporters must maintain a healthy skepticism of such figures and their statements. It is increasingly common for journalists to define their role with regard to politicians in antagonistic terms: indeed, two detailed studies of media behavior documented that a significant proportion of the reporters are comfortable with an adversarial role.[161] Their perspective is well-articulated by Ellen Hume of *The Wall Street Journal*, who stated, "We have an obligation to crack through the propaganda and the fake imagery that we are being handed by [politicians], and if we have to look ugly in the process, so be it. I never became a reporter to be popular."[162] Unfortunately, the values that accompany the economics perspective are now firmly entrenched in many Canadian newsrooms. Peter Desberats describes a process evident in most newsrooms, in which reporters see that their superiors give preferential treatment to those employees who follow instructions and produce usable material, a reality which forces them to either adapt to the norms of their chosen profession -- by providing stories that shock, titillate or otherwise attract an audience -- or find another line of work.[163] To get ahead in the business, journalists must now work according to a standardized formula, within specific bounds. A standard of "interpretive reporting" has now become the norm: analysis and commentary, once confined to the editorial pages, are now found throughout the pages of the modern newspaper. The line that separates mere reporting and expressing personal opinion about a subject -- once very important and unbroachable -- has become blurred in the product of contemporary media.

At the micro, individual level, the personal ideologies of journalists are important influences on their coverage, that in turn affects the public agenda. This is worrisome for the simple reason that journalists are not a representative group: their class, education, and politics are quite different from the bulk of the population.[164] Studies have shown that most reporters hold different political ideologies than the bulk of their audience: over 80 percent of Ottawa reporters identify themselves as occupying the left side of the spectrum, as opposed to the mere 4.2 percent who saw themselves on the right.[165] Their interests, accordingly, are dissimilar as well. Hence the media's agenda may have little resonance with the priorities of their regular audience members; indeed, it may be diametrically opposed.[166] One U.S. study of sources used for news stories about reform of the welfare system, protection of the consumer and the environment, and the advantages or disadvantages of nuclear energy discovered that reporters consistently favored sources that shared their own perspectives.

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[161] Frederick J. Fletcher, "The Media and the 1984 Landslide," in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (Summer 1992), p.169, and Gilsdorf and Bernier, p. 22.

[162] Cited in Sabato, p.159.

[163] Desberats, p.115.

> On welfare reform, liberal sources predominate over conservative ones. On consumer issues they look to Ralph Nader, the public interest movement, and liberal activist groups. On pollution and the environment, they select environmental groups and, once again, liberal leaders. On nuclear energy, anti-nuclear sources are the most

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[164] The evidence to support this assertion has several sources: Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman's 1981 study of the U.S. "media elite" (a category including senior journalists from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, the three major television networks and PBS) an ongoing survey of Canadian journalists by Peter Snow, a master's project by Bob Bergen, while a student at the University of Calgary, and a forthcoming study by Barry Cooper, entitled "Sins of Omission: A Study of CBC Television News". See Desberats, p.140 and Taras, p.48 for an overview of this subject, along with S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman and Linda Lichter, The Media Elite (Bethesda: Adler and Adler, 1986).

[165] Cited in Desberats, p.141. Interestingly, this study also discovered that the number of journalists expressing "leftist" preferences in Ottawa was considerably higher than found among the press in either Washington or New York. Some have attributed the predominantly negative media coverage given to the proposed Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement in the 1988 campaign to the left-wing political ideology held by the majority of Canadian journalists. It is curious, though, that such a preponderance of left-wing perspectives among members of the media in this country has had little obvious impact on their product; with only a few notable exceptions, most forsake the left for the middle ground in the course of fulfilling their duties.

[166] McCormack, p.463. See also Jeffrey C. Hubbard, Melvin L. DeFleur and Louis B. DeFleur, "Mass Media Influences on Public Conceptions of Social Problems," in Social Problems 23 (1975).

> popular....Journalists by no means depend exclusively on liberal viewpoints. They cite a mixture of public and private, partisan and non-partisan, liberal and conservative sources. But the liberal side consistently outweighs the conservative.[167]

Hence it is likely that members of certain groups in society will be allowed to express their opinions in the press, and have their interests championed by the media. It is less likely that others -- racial minorities, the poor, and women -- will have an equal opportunity, for the very reason that their perspectives on political and societal realities are unlike those of many journalists. With regard to political partisanship, the clear majority of a representative group of Canadian journalists identified themselves with the left in admitting that they were supportive of nationalization and opposed to privatization, felt that legislation should be introduced to more closely control the activities of big business, but not big labor, and supported the New Democratic Party over the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives.[168] Standards of journalistic ethics may influence coverage decisions, but these are always subject to other imperatives, most notably the necessity to compete with other media institutions for the attention -- and the wallets -- of consumers. Desberats notes that ethical considerations often fall victim to media competition or getting media product to market.[169] Rather than applying standards of ethical reporting across the board, though, most media agencies utilize them on a case by case basis, depending on limitations imposed by other factors.

Thus occupational constraints and role perceptions are enormously significant in shaping and deciding the media -- and hence the public --

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[167] S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, The Media Elite (New York: Adler and Adler, 1986), p.62.

[168] Cited in Desberats, p.141.

[169] Desberats, p.181. He writes, "Indeed, an apt motto for many newsrooms might be 'Yes, we believe in ethical journalism, but this story is different.'"

agenda. Overall, the organizational patterns and standards held by agencies in all three mediums in their contemporary state give rise to an important criticism: over time they tend to trivialize both politics and major social problems, reducing them to personality conflicts while ignoring their factual aspects. As well, evident in newspapers, radio and television journalism is, for commercial reasons, a "deliberate sacrifice of depth for breadth and variety."[170] The capture of a larger audience share and hence increased advertising revenues remains the paramount concern. Stories that demand careful, thoughtful coverage to reveal their various nuances or related implications -- or for the sake of the media's social responsibility -- are more often than not either glossed over, or are dropped from coverage altogether. It can be argued that most news stories demand such coverage -- regardless of their medium -- owing to an unalterable reality; in the words of one author, "there can be the bitterest disagreement about detailed positions within a general consensus of what ought to be argued about."[171]

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[170] Ibid., p.49.

[171] Qualter, p.147.

Environment

The media message is also a product of its environment. The agencies of mass communication are influenced in their coverage decisions by the marketplace in which they operate. Obviously, this has far less significance in deciding what can and will be covered, and the manner in which it can be reported for media in this country than in others[172], but the importance of an environmental "model" of news selection and presentation for Canadian journalism cannot be ignored. Within Canada, regionalist impulses are the most important determinants of media content, particularly in terms of identification, tone and style of reporting. Ours is a divided country. Differences among Canadians exist in terms of religion, ethnicity, geography, culture, provincial economic bases and language. Each contributes to the fortification of particular outlooks on societal objectives. These fault lines are most obviously reflected in electoral results at both the provincial and federal levels, and have steadily increased in overall political significance since the Quiet Revolution irrevocably changed Quebec society, Canadian federalism and the imperatives of national leadership.

But the media have enhanced the impact of those changes: in its coverage of such events as the 1970 October Crisis, the 1976 Quebec election, the 1979 and 1980 federal elections, the 1980-1981 intergovernmental negotiations, and most recently the national debate over two failed constitutional initiatives in 1990 and 1992, the reporting of French- and English-speaking journalists have both reflected and reinforced inward-looking and close-minded perspectives on the part of their audiences. In this country, the reality of a huge imbalance in population -- coupled with the fact that most media agencies are based in the central region -- has meant that the national political agenda has been determined by the circumstances of those in Ontario and Quebec. Hence issues of French-language services and the future of the Autopact, which largely impact in a direct sense only on the lives of residents of Ontario and Quebec become matters of Canada-wide importance. Correspondingly, subjects such as the East-coast fishery or industries such as cedar-shakes and -shingles in British Columbia or potash in Saskatchewan remain the isolated concerns of provincial governments. This reality of media coverage has influenced both election results and government policies for one reason: the very substance of the public consciousness -- the issues that matter, that are deserving of legislative address, and whose solution become electoral criteria -- originates with the media.

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[172] The media in countries under religious or military leadership operate in a significantly more constrained environment than in the largely secular, democratic climate that characterizes the politics of the western democracies, Canada among them.

Inevitable patterns of introspection are at the root of Canada's national division. There is the natural tendency for journalists to side with their own. National news is usually interpreted from the point of view of provincial interests: its significance is, therefore, determined against that yardstick. Regional/provincial influences on information interpretation may be based around one or a combination of the following factors: provincial economic base, population origin, size, ethnic breakdown, pattern of concentration, and history. These will affect the response of the residents and leadership of that province to outside stimuli, such as federal legislation. It is likely that a province with abundant natural resources will respond distinctively to initiatives on the part of the national authorities to control access to, or sale of, those commodities. Friction between Alberta and the federal government in the 1970s and 1980s over oil revenues serves as an illustration of this fact, as do recent quarrels over federal-provincial jurisdiction concerning Quebec's Great Whale hydro project and Saskatchewan's Rafferty-Alameda dams. Similarly, a region or province with a particular culture, language, institutional framework, and history will react strongly to national legislation affecting those characteristics, as demonstrated by the reaction of a significant portion of Canada's population -- egged on by the media -- from the early 1960s until today to a variety of federal initiatives at constitutional reform including Fulton-Favreau, the Victoria Charter, the Constitution Act, 1981, Meech Lake, and Charlottetown. Media coverage is inevitably structured around conceptions of audience preferences, and the role perceptions and personal ideologies of those employed by the industry. News interpretation, thus, revolves around self-interest, is demonstrably reflected by provincial/regional mindsets in news coverage, and has produced standardized conventions in news interpretation on the part of Canadian media.

These conventions, founded in a particular provincial culture and history, have given rise to a particular political mindset. And they have had an unfortunate impact on the larger society, as found by the Committee on Inquiry into National Broadcasting Service of the C.R.T.C.. Its members decided that Canadian journalists were on the whole "biased to the point of subversiveness" because "so far as they are able, they prevent Canadians from getting enough balanced information about Canada to make informed decisions regarding the country's future."[173] These systemic biases are damaging for national unity. Residents of English-speaking Canada do not get an accurate picture of events and issues in Quebec, while those in French-speaking Canada are persistently given incomplete and slanted information about the rest of the nation by the media in the province. This fact has taken on increased significance in recent years. The CBC and its French-language counterpart Radio-Canada were originally designed as a means to protect Canadian culture from the influences of American broadcasting, to compensate for patterns of introspection among provincial media, and most importantly, to foster a sense of national belonging; unfortunately, there is clear evidence that the agency has failed to live up to its mandate.[174]

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[173] Cited in Desberats, p.43.

This failure has serious consequences for national unity. Canadian media portray very different images of the realities of politics and society between the "two solitudes", thus fortify the ethnic and linguistic divisions so problematic to the federation. The same political-cultural split that marks Canada's federal politics, then, which originates in the linguistic division, also marks the bulk of its contemporary news coverage. English- and French-language media interpret the same news events quite differently. Arthur Siegel provides two examples of this fact. During the 1969 Federal-Provincial Constitutional Conference, the media's portrait of the Canadian federation diverged along linguistic lines. Quebec papers portrayed a "two-nation parity concept", with Quebec leaders representing French Canada and Prime Minister Trudeau speaking on behalf of English

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[174] The election of the Parti Quebecois in November 1976 sparked a committee of inquiry into the national broadcasting service. The Boyle Committee, which presented its report in July 1977 found almost no interaction between the French- and English-language wings of the CBC. The committee concluded, "as presented by the [broadcast] media, Canada is in a state of deep schizophrenia: if English and French Canadians were on different planets there could hardly be a greater contrast of views and information." Committee of Inquiry into National Broadcasting Service, Report (Ottawa: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 1977), p.62, cited in Siegel, p.222.

Canada, while their counterparts in the rest of the country perceived the country as comprised of equal provinces, each having its own representatives.[175] And coverage of the 1970 October Crisis showed a similar divergence, as French-language media institutions and their counterparts in the English-speaking provinces displayed notable differences in reporting characteristics, values and norms. Quebec papers did not perceive the kidnappings as a threat to national unity, were Quebec-centered in their interpretation of developments, and placed emphasis on political personalities as opposed to government institutions. Their coverage displayed a marked concern over international reactions to the crisis, particularly those of European and Francophone countries, and placed the crisis in context with historic and contemporary social and economic injustices endured by French Canadians. Overall their role over the duration of the crisis was an activist one. The French-language press made frequent references to media and journalists, and contained signed editorials and extensive background articles by noted Quebec intellectuals and academics. In contrast, the reaction of the English-Canadian press to the October Crisis was quite different. The FLQ and its activities were portrayed as a threat to the Canadian federation, the story was interpreted in pan-Canadian terms, and emphasis was placed on government institutions and processes, rather than personalities. The English-language media showed greater concern toward Canadian, as opposed to foreign, reactions to the kidnappings and the government's response to them, and awarded greater importance to the economic implications of the crisis than the various other issues it raised. And the media outside Quebec kept a relatively low profile over the course of the story.[176]

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[175] Siegel, p.210.

Perhaps the most significant of Siegel's findings of the differences between the French- and English-language media in the context of the October Crisis, though, involved the homogeneity of coverage that existed within Quebec, and the wide variety of interpretation apparent in the press outside its borders. The response to this story by the media in the English-speaking provinces was quite diverse, apparently affected by the size of an institution's particular community, its distance from the center of the crisis, and its distance from major metropolitan centers. In contrast, the Quebec press all seemed to define the crisis according to a particular perspective, following the lead of the Montreal dailies. The wider implications of the story, for the political system, government institutions and the Canadian economy, were presented in keeping with this early-established position. Both these examples substantiate the position that the Quebec media more frequently interpret news events in accordance with inward-looking, province-centered analytical frameworks than do their counterparts in other provinces. Events and issues do not rise or fall in any Canadian province's media institutions merely on their own merits, but in the Quebec press it is more likely that their significance will be awarded depending on a preestablished set of criteria, involving their possible impact on the province's language, culture and government. In Quebec, the news and linguistic-provincial identity are inextricably combined.

This has long been the case. There have been noticeable, and systematic differences in the news coverage and editorial perspective in English- and French-speaking Canada virtually since Confederation. There is a long-established editorial tradition in the Quebec media that has emphasized reflection, interpretation and discussion of issues, rather than their mere reporting. As Lysiane Gagnon observed, journalism in the province has always been characterized by "...the predominance of analysis, as opposed to [the] simple reporting of events; the tendency to treat matters conceptually rather than in terms of people and events; the very Cartesian need to rationalize..."[177] As another writer put it, "They don't report the news in Quebec, they critique the news."[178] In the English-speaking provinces, such an activist style of journalism is largely absent.[179] Reporters in Quebec have long utilized their positions to influence the political, cultural and economic development of their society; there has also been a significant crossover between the province's journalism and its politics. Henri Bourassa, Claude Ryan, Gérard Pelletier and Réné Lévesque are only the most prominent examples of those who have had distinguished careers in both fields.[180] This tradition has its roots in the province's culture. As the Kent Commission reported, the fact that, beginning in the nineteenth century, Quebec journalism was supported by the elites of society as opposed to revenue from advertising influenced the professional values and behavior of its membership. Lacking the entrepreneurial tradition common to their counterparts in other parts of Canada, Quebec journalists historically were never invested with their individualist orientation: collectivism has been, and continues to be the perspective of reporting inside the province.[181] While both groups are subject to the various organizational pressures characteristic to their industry, the essential difference in journalistic role perception between English- and French-speaking members has significant impact on their product. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism discovered in the 1960s how significant the differences in the attitudes of journalists toward their work were: French-language reporters saw interpretation as an integral part of their job, while those in English-speaking Canada regarded straight reporting to be their central task.[182] Journalism in Quebec, as a result of its unique past, is characterized by analysis and patriotism, as opposed to the industry's norms in other parts of the country. The differences between English- and French-language media in this country has resulted in a chasm of interpretation; as the Boyle Committee put it, "...if English and French Canadians were on different planets there could hardly be a greater contrast of views and information."[183]

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[176] Siegel, pp.210-222.

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[177] Lysiane Gagnon, "Journalism and Ideologies in Quebec," in Royal Commission on Newspapers, volume II (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1981), p.28.

[178] Christopher Harris, "La Tribune De La Press, " in Parliamentary Government, vol.7, nos. 1-2 (1987), p.11, cited in Taras, p.77.

[179] Taras, p.77.

[180] Taras, p.77.

The essential division between English- and French-language media in Canada revolves around the issue of Quebec's place within the federation. That a nationalist perspective is prevalent among much of the

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[181] Thelma McCormack's article, "The Political Culture and the Press of Canada," in Canadian Journal of Political Science (September 1983), pp.451-472 discusses the Kent Commission's report. The authors felt that the key to the francophone media lay in the province's culture: its language, institutions, history and social relationships. The report states, "because of the particular character of their society and culture, French-speaking journalists have always regarded North American liberalism with distrust." It goes on to observe that French-speaking journalists have traditionally been more collectively oriented, and regard their occupation as "invested with a certain nationalist mission." Further, McCormack notes the members of the Commission regarded "this nationalist mission" as "interfer[ing] with the empirical style of the anglophone press, [and prompting, in their words], 'a certain disdain for mere 'hard fact', and a strong inclination toward analysis, patriotic dissertations, and preaching...'". See McCormack, pp. 465-466.

[182] Cited in Siegel, p.209.

[183] Siegel, p.9.

Quebec press is unquestionable, for it is a long-standing fact. Their agencies provided support for the neophyte R.I.N. party in the 1966 provincial election, and in the opinion of many in the Trudeau cabinet, substantially assisted the Parti Quebecois in their 1976 victory. The Quebec media played a considerable -- and highly controversial -- role during the 1970 FLQ crisis.[184] And analysis of the coverage given to recent developments in Quebec-Canada relations such as the Meech Lake process and the failed Charlottetown Accord demonstrates that biased perspectives -- consistently favoring the nationalist side -- continue to steer coverage in the French-speaking media.[185] This has made the obtaining of balanced coverage for the federalist position in constitutional negotiations in the Quebec media all but impossible. And it has resulted in a marked absence of substantive dialogue in the media between French- and English-speaking Canadians. Those inside Quebec have not been given an accurate rendering of the attitudes and opinions of those outside its borders regarding the place of the province and its francophones within Canada, and those in the other provinces and territories have been, and continue to be given the impression that only one constitutional view exists among *Canadiens* : sovereignty at best, or a substantial devolution of central powers to Quebec City at worst. As Laurier LaPierre has noted, "the information provided by the media [in the province] is designed to limit the people's options within Quebec and to send shock waves (called "clear messages") to the rest of Canada."[186] The nationalist stance of the French Canadian media is in part a result of the immense changes in Quebec society that took place beginning in the 1960s. Most journalists in the province are products of that era, and continue to be affected by its aftershocks; thus, they remain preoccupied with the issues that it brought to the front of the national agenda, namely the future of the French language and Quebec's place within the Canadian federation.[187] These issues have become an essential part of the interpretive framework they bring to news coverage: the chief focus of attention is Quebec City, not Ottawa, and information is analyzed in the light of its importance to Quebecers, rather than Canadians as a whole. It is thus inevitable that the French-language press should consistently side with the Quebec government when that government or its policies are criticized from outside; there is a natural closing of ranks. Since the Quiet Revolution, this chasm of interpretation between English- and French-speaking journalists has grown. Early evidence of a separation in perspective is provided by media coverage of the national emergency of 1970. As Arthur Siegel noted, "[during the October Crisis] there were two distinct patterns of news coverage, which meant that the FLQ crisis looked different to French and English readers. The different patterns of coverage reflected an organization of information which projected different perceptions in an overall context of what was taking place and which aspects were important in the resolution of the crisis."[188]

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[184] See Daniel LaTouche, Mass Media and Communication in a Canadian Political Crisis," in Communications in Canadian Society ed. Benjamin D. Singer (Don Mills: Addison-Wesley Publishers, 1983), pp.201-02. LaTouche points out that the Quebec media, in addition to reporting on the crisis, became active participants in it, as several of their agencies acted as communication intermediaries between the FLQ and the authorities, between various FLQ cells, and between the group and the public. *Le Devoir* became the rallying point for Quebec's intellectual and political elite during the crisis, and then abandoned all pretense of journalistic responsibility when its editorial demanded that the government negotiate in "good faith" with the FLQ to ensure the safe release of their hostages. After the crisis, a number of journalists were either fired or forced to resign owing to their performance.

[185] Soderlund, Briggs, Romanow and Wagenberg, pp.140-141.

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[186] Laurier Lapierre, "Meet the Notables, Who Dictate What Quebecers Think," in *The Globe and Mail* Saturday, March 21, 1992.
[187] Taras, p.76.

Perhaps the best documentation of the national disconnection that now characterizes Canadian news is provided by the findings of a study of media coverage during the 1979 federal election.[189] Frederick J. Fletcher discovered that the French- and English-language print media exhibited very different priorities when reporting the campaign. His findings are summarized in tables 1 and 2, with the most significant figures highlighted in bold type.

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[188] Siegel, p.214.

[189] Frederick J. Fletcher, "Playing the Game: The Mass Media and the 1979 Campaign," in Canada at the Polls, 1979 and 1980 ed. Howard R. Penniman (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), p.315-316. The design of, and content contained in tables 1 and 2 are based on Fletcher's own tables, although some effort has been made to simplify and streamline his layout.

Table 1: Issues Emphasized in Daily Newspaper Front-Page Coverage, by Region, 1979 Campaign

Issue	West %	Ontario %	Quebec %	East %
Confederation	24	22	51	36
National Unity	9	6	19	11
Quebec/bilingualism	3	6	18	4
Federal-provincial relations	12	11	14	21
Economics	42	22	21	26
Inflation	21	17	8	26
Unemployment	9	6	3	6
Other	12	-	10	16
Leaders	6	22	14	12
Energy	12	17	3	8

Table 2: Issues Emphasized in Daily Newspaper Editorials, by Region, 1979 Campaign

Issue	West %	Ontario %	Quebec %	East %
Confederation	18	44	43	19
National Unity	6	15	19	11
Quebec/bilingualism	3	3	9	4
Federal-provincial relations	9	26	15	4
Economics	44	24	26	26
Inflation	15	15	11	15
Unemployment	0	3	6	11
Other	29	6	9	0
Leaders	18	3	21	19
Energy	6	15	4	7

Fletcher found significant differences in terms of both issue coverage and editorial emphasis. Those subjects concerned with the state and future of Canada -- including national unity, bilingualism policy and intergovernmental relations -- received significantly more attention in Quebec than they did in the media serving an audience living outside of its borders. 51 percent of the front-page coverage of French-language papers was devoted to such matters, compared to 24 percent of western attention; in terms of editorial subject, Confederation was clearly more of a concern for the Ontario and Quebec media. Subjects that mattered to the West after a decade marked by increasing tensions between the national and provincial governments over taxation and fiscal relations and the repercussions of OPEC militancy were reflected in the regional media's attention to such matters as inflation, unemployment and energy policy. Forty-two percent of western reporting concerned these subjects; in central Canada such issues attracted only half as much attention. Similar numbers were reflected in the editorial realm.

Newspapers in Atlantic Canada also reflected the traditional perspectives of their readership, itself the product of historical development and prospects of future prosperity in the region; accordingly, issues concerned with Confederation received more attention than economic concerns. The lower level of concern toward the subject demonstrated by the western papers may be attributable to the rising confidence of both their populations and their governments with regard to those provinces' economic well-being at the time. And Fletcher's discoveries with regard to the 1979 election do not exist in isolation: he found similar differences in the coverage priorities exhibited by the media in the 1984 election.[190] His data also illuminates several other important aspects of the Canadian disconnection: Quebec and Ontario newspapers placed twice as much emphasis on Confederation issues than their counterparts (Table 2), thus substantiating the belief that there is a "Central Canadian" perspective in this country's news. The higher importance given to energy by Ontario papers during the 1979 campaign may reflect the self-interest of the province: the 1970s pitted those that had a resource (and felt that profiting by it was their right) against those that needed a commodity (and believed that access to it was a guarantee). Hence, increased prominence was given to "Energy" as opposed to "Economics".

When this documentation is placed in context with the research into the media effects of "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming', its significance for the purposes of the central argument of this thesis becomes clear. The media and the substance of their message still enjoy substantial "believability" in the eyes of the public.[191] The "causal arrow" has been proved to point only in one direction: from the media to the public.[192] Fletcher's data, then, documenting that the media in different parts of the country emphasize different subjects as they cover an event -- in this case a national election campaign -- coupled with the literature on media effects adds legitimization to position of the author that Canadian media, in the course of their operations, create and foster decentralizing and hence potentially destablizing views among members of the public, beliefs that have considerable impact upon the strength of national integration. Fletcher's documentation of Canadian division offers concrete substantiation to my assertion that Canadian news is a disconnected reality.

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[190] Fletcher, pp.179-180.

[191] Robinson and Kohut, p.188.

[192] Roberts and Bachen, p.46, and Becker, p.529.

By portraying very different images of the realities of politics and society between the "two solitudes", the agencies of the mass media thereby fortify the ethnic and linguistic divisions so problematic to Canadian federalism.[193] In Canada, the media "add their weight to the forces supporting regional rather than country-wide political interests."[194] The variety of media perspectives in different parts of the country have encouraged provincialist, as opposed to pan-Canadian patterns of thinking and identification among the population. The Canadian Senate Study of the Mass Media (1970) observed, in journalism, "the traditions, the audience preferences, the mythologies, the economics of publishing and broadcasting -- all are shaped by the French Fact, to the extent that the province's [Quebec] media cannot be viewed simply as part of the Canadian whole."[195] Such gaps in the internal communication system of any nation -- let alone one as geographically enormous, and regionally, economically and culturally divided as this one -- pose a grave threat to national unity.

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[193] Siegel, p.8. See also Black, p,50.

[194] Black, p.50.

[195] Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media, Report (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970, Volume 1), p.95.

Summary

The substance of the public agenda is in large part a product of various media "gates", the economic, technical, occupational practices, legal inhibitives, and regional conceptualizations that influence the agencies of mass communication in their operations at both the micro and macro levels, determining characteristics of their final product. That these factors may considerably affect news content is politically significant, in that media content has been demonstrated to have great bearing on Canadian society. If an issue is to receive widespread public and consequent government address, it must first attract media attention; if it is to do so, it must conform to the particular selection criteria and various applicable influences held by the news agencies in each medium. During election campaigns, the media's issue selection may constitutes for the majority of voters an crucial standard by which to judge the suitability of those competing for elected office; the fact that some issues are highlighted by the media at the expense of others may affect the outcome of the national vote. Such subjects as regional development, foreign policy and environmental protection may be very important to a significant part of the population, but if the media chooses to ignore them in favor of others -- national unity, economic renewal, the ideal of strong leadership, for example -- they will not become "election issues." Between elections, the pervasiveness of the media message is undiminished: if an issue is to attract government attention, it must first be brought onto the public agenda by the media. This is the result of the ultimate "unknowability" of contemporary politics. As one author put it, "perhaps more than any other aspect of our environment, the political arena -- all those issues and persons about whom we hold opinions and knowledge -- is a second hand reality."[196] Academics have documented that the media can have an enormous impact on both political behavior and societal perspectives in the modern nation. This has particular relevance to Canada, for the agencies of mass communication may have assisted in the maintenance of our country's two solitudes. Chapter Three will present the findings of the case study.

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[196] Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs, The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda Setting Function of the Press (St.Paul: West Publishing Company, 1977), p.7.

Chapter Three: The Case Study

This thesis rests on two assertions about the news media: first, that their agencies play a significant role in setting the public agenda, especially the political agenda, and secondly that various economic, occupational, cultural and other factors influence the substance of that agenda. The working hypothesis is that, in Canada, economic, organizational and environmental considerations are the more influential of these factors. Pierre Elliot Trudeau's speech on the Charlottetown constitutional accord was selected as the subject of the test case in the express hope that the coverage sparked by his views would reveal distinctive patterns of media coverage, illustrating influences attributable to economics, organizational routines, and interpretations rooted in provincial or regional identification. It is plausible that coverage of this particular political event might prove distinctive, in that it might expose divisions in regional or provincial perspective, and could effectively illustrate characteristics in coverage attributable to facts of ownership and economic structure. The purpose of the case study was to answer the central query proposed by this thesis: do the mass media of this country actually contribute to regionalist tendencies, as opposed to fostering ideas of pan-Canadianism through their coverage? The speech at *la Maison du Egg Roll* might provide the evidence to support an idea of media-contributed decentralization, in that it might expose a fractured state of news coverage. However, this subject would also present certain important limitations. Legal and technical factors could not be tested by this case study, because it focused on the print medium, which is largely unregulated. Further, the media response to this event would be unlikely to substantiate -- in anything but the most implicit terms -- the criticisms leveled at media concentration contained in Chapter Two. But with regard to providing evidence for the effects of occupational routines and regional/provincial identification in determining the interpretation given to events, it might prove to be ideal.

Applying the gatekeeping model of news selection and presentation to Trudeau's speech initially prompted several questions, based on the economic, occupational and regional imperatives discussed in Chapter Two. First, would there be corporate commonality: would the coverage of newspapers belonging to the same company display more similarities or differences? Media coverage in this instance might confirm the homogenizing influence of chain ownership, but there remained the possibility that media employees might have more journalistic and editorial independence than was originally thought. The corporate parents of newspapers might exercise economic parsimony over their media holdings. Further, would a failure to provide in-depth coverage of this story be common to all papers? I expected that the reputation of the Southam papers to devoting more journalistic resources to covering the news and and demonstrating more editorial independence from central ownership authority than their Thomson competitors would be substantiated. Second, would patterns of occupational behavior be evident in the story angles chosen by journalists, in the identities of those whose opinions on Trudeau and his position they publicized, and the overall tone, scope and breadth of their articles? Would pack journalism be evident in the coverage of this particular event? Third, would regional or provincial identification show itself in the media reaction to Trudeau's words; would there be a characteristically "Western" and "Quebec" response to Trudeau, similar to Fletcher's discovery regarding the 1979 campaign? Would these perspectives mitigate against the homogenizing influence of common ownership? In summary, would the coverage of this particular political event display characteristics attributable to the three "gatekeeping" influences particularly applicable to it -- economics, occupational imperatives, and regional perspectives?

In order to answer these questions, twelve Canadian newspapers were selected for analysis on the basis of their location and ownership. Their coverage of the speech on October 1 and subsequent reaction to it was monitored for 25 days, the remaining duration of the national referendum campaign. A total of 284 direct and related news stories and editorials were examined according to the following variables, as they were applicable: source (in-house, organizational, or special), length (both in terms of total words, and number of lines), page location, accompanying or associated stories (on the same page, either above or below), the identity of those whose opinions received citation, key words or phrases utilized by the author, the overall position of the author and what interpretation was expressed in the story (either favorable or negative), and related graphics (photographs and political cartoons). This data was separated according to the three "components" of media gatekeeping hypothesized as most applicable to the coverage of this example, namely economic controls, occupational conventions and regional positions. In order to clearly display the findings, the data was installed within a number of tables, comparing the twelve newspapers in terms of the amount of coverage they awarded by Trudeau's speech, where those articles originated, whose opinions were solicited, and the particular aspects of the Trudeau record that were emphasized in their stories. The newspapers surveyed, and their ownership are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Surveyed Newspapers

Newspaper	Ownership
Vancouver Sun	Southam (Hollinger and Power Corporation each own 18.7 percent as of March 1993)
[Victoria] *Times Colonist*	Canadian Newspapers Co. (Thomson)
Edmonton Journal	Southam
Regina Leader-Post	The Leader-Post Limited (independent)
Winnipeg Free Press	Canadian Newspapers Co. (Thomson)
Ottawa Citizen	Southam
Globe and Mail	The Globe and Mail Ltd. (Thomson)
Toronto Star	Torstar (reciprocal minority ownership with Southam)
Le Devoir	L'Imprimerie Populaire (non-profit foundation)
Montreal Gazette	Southam
[St.John's] *Evening Telegram*	Canadian Newspapers Co. (Thomson)
Halifax Chronicle Herald	The Halifax Herald Ltd. (G.W.D. Investments, independent)

Amount of Coverage

Table 4. Amount of Coverage, by region

	West	Ontario	Quebec	East
Total Lines	3214	4620	3016	979
Total Number of Stories	97	113	59	25
Average Number of Lines per Story	33.13	40.88	51.12	39.16

Table 4 summarizes the amount of coverage devoted to Trudeau's speech by the twelve newspapers, arranged along regional lines. The speech and the subsequent reaction sparked by it was of substantially more interest to the gatekeepers of the major papers in Ontario, as shown. The three surveyed papers in this province were the clear leaders in coverage, with 113 separate stories totaling 4620 lines of type, devoted to the subject. The rest of the papers fell far below this standard of high coverage. This may be attributable to two factors. The high readership (in relative terms) enjoyed by *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star* and *The Ottawa Citizen* may permit their editors the freedom to more fully explore issues and may allow them greater rein in terms of reflecting the debate over Trudeau's position. Certainly this may be true for the two papers surveyed in Atlantic Canada, whose coverage of this event was minimal at best. Or the nature of ownership and the "style" of certain papers may have led their editors to devote more resources to covering the news. *The Globe and Mail's* selfdescription as Canada's "national newspaper" may have imposed an obligation to provide more comprehensive coverage of the news than papers of more modest aspirations, servicing smaller markets. Whatever its origin, though, the dissimilarity in the level of media response to the speech may have given Trudeau's views increased weight in certain markets as opposed to others.

Origin of Coverage

Table 5. Origin of Stories, per Newspaper, by Region, in percentages[197]

	West			Ontario			Quebec			East		
	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.
Staff	27	8	6	12	29	28	47	-	28	-	0	24
Special	7	0	3	2	6	6	3	-	5	-	8	0
Service	28	13	12	15	1	2	6	-	8	-	44	24
Total # of Stories		97			113			59			25	

Table 6. Origin of Wire service Copy, in percentages

	West			Ontario			Quebec			East		
	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.
CP	4	12	12	4	1	2	3	-	5	-	24	24
Southam	18	0	0	10	0	0	3	-	0	-	0	0
Other[198]	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	-	3 (Syn)	-	20 (T)	0
Total # of Stories		97			113			59			25	

Table 5 summarizes the origin of all stories about Trudeau's speech and the debate sparked by it. Table 6 breaks down the origin of wire

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[197] Individual percentages will total more than 100 percent due to rounding.

[198] The sub-category of "other" includes those stories or columns of non-Southam or -CP origin. The (T) indicates a story from the Thomson News Service, while (Syn) denotes a syndicated column (such as Jeffrey Simpson's in *Le Devoir* or Diane Francis's in *The* [St. John's] *Evening Telegram*).

Table 5 summarizes the origin of all stories about Trudeau's speech and the debate sparked by it. Table 6 breaks down the origin of wire service copy in detail. The Quebec papers were the clear leaders in terms of staff-produced stories, as 75 percent of their coverage of this subject was entrusted to their employees. The papers in Ontario were less reliant on their staff to generate copy (57 percent), and those in Western Canada were even less so (41 percent). The papers in Atlantic Canada ranked last in this area of analysis, as only 24 percent of their coverage was created in-house. Correspondingly, the text of the Atlantic and Western papers demonstrated the highest dependence on news service copy among the papers included in this survey. In the East, fully 68 percent of the coverage awarded to the subject of Trudeau's views and the subsequent reaction to them originated from either the Canadian Press (CP) or Thomson news services. In the West, 53 percent of the copy devoted to this subject was service-generated. It is plausible that the high circulation numbers enjoyed by the Ontario papers (particularly *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*), and commensurately, their relatively abundant resources (in terms of staff sizes and operating revenues) may influence the "origin" of their coverage of certain subjects, in that they are industry leaders and are themselves producers of much of the CP and Thomson news service copy utilized by papers in other parts of Canada. The high reliance of the papers in Quebec upon staff-generated copy may have another origin: the linguistic, cultural and social differences between the two Canadas may necessitate the tailoring of information to fit a particular market.

Chain newspapers very frequently used service material, produced by either the Canadian Press, or their own organization. Such reports were sometimes superficially rewritten, with an extra paragraph added, or several deleted, and with a different title either replacing or being superimposed over the original. This pattern was particularly obvious with regard to those papers belonging to the Southam chain. Locally-oriented coverage of the former prime minister's speech, however, was usually written by staff members of each newspaper. With regard to the use of photographs and cartoons, these were almost invariably common across newspapers under the same ownership. In this instance, Thomson papers relied more upon CP than their own Thomson News Service to provide them with material, while those papers belonging to the Southam chain used Southam News far more frequently than they did CP. The two most frequently utilized stories were CP-produced (one by Warren Caragata and another by Linda Shearman), and appeared verbatim in several newspapers, albeit with different titles.

Further, the larger circulation papers allowed far more pieces of "special" (non-service, non-staff) origin than others. In Ontario, 14 percent of the coverage devoted to the subject of Trudeau's speech and reaction to it fell under that category, while the surveyed papers in the West, Quebec and the East afforded less space to such writings (10, 8 and 8 percent respectively). The editors of *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star* and *The Ottawa Citizen* were either more receptive to outside opinions than others, or they had the operational resources (specifically space, a function of finances) to afford these writings. This had the result of depriving the readers of certain papers access to the opinions of people like Gordon Robertson or Thomas d'Aquino, access that was enjoyed by those in larger markets. The papers with the smallest circulations, such as *The Victoria Times-Colonist, The Halifax Chronicle-Herald* and *The Winnipeg Free Press* were notably devoid of such stories, their coverage instead following a quite predictable format of charge and counter-charge. The decision on the part of some of the surveyed newspapers to include the opinions of individuals less likely to be dismissed by the public as overtly partisan may have effectively broadened the debate over Trudeau's verdict on Charlottetown for their readers, as that response was frequently of a more reasoned, intellectual character than the views of politicians, who usually resorted to personal insults and criticisms of the Trudeau legacy.

Coverage of this event was largely superficial, in that only three of the twelve newspapers actually ran unadulterated text from Trudeau's speech. And those three found it sufficient to merely print the short, introductory section of it. So, just as Comber and Mayne discovered in the 1984 campaign, most coverage of this story consisted of journalistic "analysis" of what Trudeau said, not a relaying of his actual words. The "hierarchy of rights" criticism, which formed the central tenet of his argument, was virtually ignored by the surveyed newspapers. It is possible that media "gatekeepers" felt that a comprehensive exploration of this question -- whether the Canada Clause would actually undermine individual protections contained in the existing Charter -- would take up too much space in their newspapers, would require too much journalistic resources to produce, or would prove of little interest to their readers. Such a discussion certainly would not accord with the "infotainment" news selection agenda held sacrosanct by many media agencies. For whatever reason, it is plausible that economic limitations resulted in the readers of most Canadian newspapers having to make do with less, as opposed to more information.

Comprehensiveness of Coverage

Table 7. Solicited Opinions, in percentages

	West			Ontario			Quebec			East		
	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.	Southam	Thomson	Ind.
Politicians[199]	56	89	100	84	93	78	100	-	100	-	100	100
Other Experts	28	0	0	0	7	6	0	-	0	-	0	0
General Public	16	11	0	16	0	16	0	-	0	-	0	0
†total # of Opinions		73			84			32			26	

Table 7 summarizes the sources of all opinions of Trudeau's speech at *la Maison du Egg Roll*. As documented, coverage of this event was marked by a reliance on established channels for reaction. The fact that the overwhelming majority of journalists are stationed at fixed listening posts such as the House of Commons and provincial capitals has great impact on patterns of their reporting and their interpretation of events. As stated in Chapter Two, reporters nearly always solicit the views of those in positions of power and influence: hence, the same voices are perpetually heard. Such was true over the period of this survey. In the wake of the former prime minister's speech, reporters overwhelmingly sought out the reactions of federal politicians, provincial premiers, political organizers, and a few local celebrities. In terms of national coverage, the views of federal cabinet ministers and provincial leaders formed almost the exclusive basis of "reaction" pieces in many papers. Within their federal cabinet ministers and provincial leaders formed almost the exclusive basis of "reaction" pieces in many papers. Within their provinces, individuals such as former B.C. cabinet minister Pat McGeer, former Alberta premier Peter Lougheed and former Parti Quebecois cabinet minister Jean Garon were asked for their views. On the whole, journalists seldom publicized the opinions of other informed parties, such as university professors, lawyers, or business people. Members of these groups received far less opportunity to express themselves than those of the political elite. Regional differences in this regard were striking. The Quebec and Eastern papers surveyed relied exclusively upon politicians as sources of opinion and insight, while coverage in Western papers was less slanted, allowing at least a certain degree of expression for other informed parties and members of the general public. It is plausible that a tradition of populism prevalent in the Western provinces may have been influential in this regard. But on the whole, news coverage clearly favored the political elite. As nearly all members of this elite supported the Yes side in the 1992 Referendum, media product reflected a similar bias favoring the political establishment. Hence, nationally-oriented coverage, usually service-produced, contained a notable lack of support for Trudeau's opposition to the Charlottetown agreement or agreement with his interpretation of the Canada Clause. Table 7 shows that with regard to this event, there was little effort on the part of the media to go outside institutionalized sources of opinion. The most important effect of such a pattern of news coverage is that it frequently serves to perpetuate the myth that there is one, "correct" opinion of a subject, and that the views of those in positions of power and influence are more valid than individuals in other fields. Those groups and individuals on the "No" side of the national debate were thus marginalized, while those of the "Yes" camp received far greater media time to advance their position. Reporters demonstrated little effort to discover alternative responses to Trudeau's position on the Canada Clause, apparently finding the ready availability of sitting politicians as sources of opinion irresistible.

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[199] The sub-category of "politician" includes both those currently in office and those now retired from public life, along with their advisors and political organizers.

And the coverage of this political event contained a glaring omission: none of the twelve newspapers apparently found it significant that none of the various parties responsible for negotiating the package of constitutional amendments called the Charlottetown Accord -- the federal and provincial governments, in addition to several native organizations -- ever offered a substantive response to Trudeau's "hierarchy of rights" thesis. Instead of meeting his challenge head on, politicians chose the strategy of attacking him personally and criticizing his political legacy instead. The substance of media coverage accordingly came to resemble that of an election campaign, replete with partisan exchanges and examples of demagoguery. The titles of many of the stories published immediately after the speech of October 1 ("Yea Sayers Rip Trudeau for Dissent", "Politicians Scathing After Trudeau No Speech" "Bourassa, PM Lash Out at Trudeau" and "PM Takes Swipes at Trudeau") are illustrative of their content. Reporters concerned themselves almost entirely with covering political reactions to Trudeau's speech, their submissions as a result becoming replete with rhetoric and insults. The tendency of the media to reduce complex arguments to a few, isolated, dramatic phrases or images was confirmed, as was a tendency to editorialize within supposedly fact-oriented articles. The media's coverage of the subsequent reaction to Trudeau's speech illustrates how prevalent the norms of "People Magazine journalism" have become in Canadian newspapers in terms of their focus on dramatic elements and shallowness of their analysis. *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Edmonton Journal* and *The Globe and Mail* did print the opinions of various legal scholars -- all claiming that Trudeau was incorrect in his interpretation of the possible impact of the Canada Clause on the existing Charter of Rights and Freedoms -- but such stories were the exception. Most papers were attracted to more dramatic and emotional material, and chose to focus on the various polemical attacks on Trudeau's personality, motives, and political legacy offered to them by a few select individuals. The most frequently cited responses to Trudeau's words came from Ontario Premier Bob Rae ("Egotistical" and "Preston Manning with intellectual pretensions"), federal Health Minister Benoit Bouchard ("A man of destruction"), P.E.I. Premier Joe Ghiz ("The father of Western alienation"), Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa ("Mr. Trudeau never had any scruples about dividing Canadians") and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who accused Trudeau of a giant concession to the provinces during the 1981 negotiations (in the form of the so-called "notwithstanding" clause). And as these comments were picked up by CP, they appeared in virtually every newspaper, word for word.

Environment

Table 8. Aspects of the Trudeau Record Emphasized

Component of Record	Newspaper Location and Number of References in percentage			
	West	Ontario	Quebec	East
Confederation				
1982 Constitution	15.6	19.2	12.8	16.1
Charter of Rights and Freedoms	11.1	35.4	19.1	9.7
Exclusion of Quebec/ Imposition of Agreement	28.9	16.2	29.8	22.6
Centralism/National Division/N.E.P.	29.1	13.1	12.8	15.9
Notwithstanding Clause	12.2	14.1	19.1	19.4
1980 Referendum	2	2	1	0
Total Number	90	99	47	31

With regard to perspectives attributable to environmental effects, interesting differences in emphasis were apparent in the coverage of the twelve newspapers surveyed. Clear division with regard to provincial interests and orientation emerged from the test data, as summarized in Table 7. While the "hierarchy of rights" argument garnered very little direct reaction -- beyond the opinions of various politicians that it was "specious" or "dishonest" -- the record of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 16 years in power received a great deal of emphasis. A sharp difference in media interpretation of the Trudeau legacy emerged in this coverage, a divergence that appears based on regional identification. Those newspapers located in the West emphasized the centralization of government powers that occurred under his leadership, particularly in the 1980-1984 period. The National Energy Program was frequently mentioned, alternatively cited as a reason to support the reformed -- and supposedly more powerful -- Senate model contained in the Charlottetown Accord, and as a reason to dismiss the former prime minister's assessment of the proposed agreement. Overall, coverage of the former prime minister's opinions was dominated by the theme of western alienation from the center, structured as it was along the lines of "Ottawa pushing us around" or "The Feds stealing from us."

In contrast, the N.E.P. appeared to be irrelevant to the Quebec newspapers, as they mentioned the economic program of the Trudeau governments in only the most general terms -- usually talking about mismanagement, over-spending and their responsibility for creating Canada's massive national debt. However, *Le Devoir* and *The Montreal Gazette* did place great emphasis on the 1981-82 patriation of the Constitution. This action was couched in clearly polemical terms, such as "the Betrayal of 1982". While *The Montreal Gazette* remained respectful of Trudeau as an individual, presumably due to an awareness of its largely anglophone audience, its coverage still contained many references to the decision on the part of the Trudeau Liberals to proceed with patriation without the signature of the Quebec government. The reporting of *Le Devoir* was more vitriolic on this subject, its stories containing as it did the views of various members of the provincial Liberal government and its Parti Quebecois opposition, all attacking Trudeau for forcing a constitution on the people of Quebec, along with the opinions of a clearly pro-sovereigntist staff.

Common ground existed in the sense that the coverage of both western and Quebec newspapers contained both implicit and explicit endorsements for increased provincial jurisdictions: this was most obvious in *The Edmonton Journal* and *Le Devoir*. In the former paper, Trudeau's record of advancing the powers of the federal government in the area of resources and taxation were cited as reasons to support the proposed Senate model; in the latter, the "Betrayal of 1982" was clearly still an explosive subject, and was reason enough to label the former prime minister's opinions irrelevant to the contemporary debate. *The Edmonton Journal* blasted the centralism of the Trudeau years, and made repeated references to the "damage" done to the province of Alberta by the National Energy Program. Several articles linked Trudeau's view of the proposed package of constitutional amendments with the reformed Senate model contained within it; in the opinion of their authors that such an institution would "severely weaken" the powers of a prime minister and prevent him from making appointments to various national bodies including the Supreme Court, Bank of Canada, the C.R.T.C., and the Canadian Wheat Board was the real reason for the former prime minister's opposition to the deal.

The response of *Le Devoir* was more complex, less accessible, as befitting its reputation as a forum for intellectual debate, and was complicated by the paper's opposition to the Charlottetown agreement itself. Editorials mused about the two diametrically opposed conceptions of the state expressed in the accord and articulated in Trudeau's response to it.

Trudeau's vision of Canada was clearly rejected ("hierarchical federalism"), but so too was the Charlottetown accord ("[it will force Quebec to] renounce [its] autonomous dynamic.") The opinion of the agreement expressed in the paper was that it did not go far enough in granting increased powers to Quebec, continued to allow federal interference in the province's affairs, and would tie it to a Canada groaning under an even more complicated and unwieldy government apparatus. In sum, Charlottetown would not solve the essential problem of Quebec's continued participation in the federation, only necessitating "resumed resistance." Trudeau was denounced for forcing the Constitution on the people of Quebec in 1981-82, and for meddling in areas of provincial jurisdiction (one article relayed the words of the province's environment minister, accusing Trudeau of obstructing Quebec's water purification program) while in power, and for continuing to advance an abstract, centralized vision of the country.

Another subject, the "notwithstanding clause" contained in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was the focus of considerable coverage, and condemnation. This much-criticized flaw in the 1982 agreement was frequently held up as a glaring example of Trudeau's failure at the negotiating table, and hence a further reason for his views on the Charlottetown proposal to be disregarded. And with regard to the opinions of editors and columnists in general, the assessments of Trudeau and the merits or weaknesses of his arguments were almost universally negative -- often virulently so. The few editorials that offered a direct response to his criticisms of the Charlottetown agreement variously termed them "fear mongering", "bitter musings", "exaggerated rhetoric;" the speech itself was declared a "sneering polemic", and an "exercise in hyperbole, twisted logic and Jesuitical sophistry." The titles of these editorials illustrate the perspectives of their authors' well: "Angry Untruths from a 'Man of Reason'" (*The Globe and Mail*), "An intellectual luxury" (*The Montreal Gazette*), and "Pierre's peculiar and dismal vision" (*The Victoria Times-Colonist*). One of the only columnists that expressed favor toward Trudeau was William Johnson in *The Montreal Gazette*, who described the former prime minister's speech as "a devastating demonstration of logic." But the overwhelming journalistic reaction was disapproval of Trudeau, of his record as leader, and his motives for intervening in the debate over the accord. This fact is either the result of the well-known and long lasting antipathy between journalists and the former Liberal leader, or a clear result of the near universal support that the Charlottetown Accord enjoyed among the political, business and intellectual elites of this country.

The results of the test case do much to substantiate the central assertion of this thesis: that the news media, by their coverage, foster regionalist, inward-looking perspectives as opposed to helping create feelings of national citizenship. The coverage awarded to Pierre Elliot Trudeau's October 1 speech in Montreal against the Charlottetown Accord was characterized by excessive uniformity within regional/provincial lines. There was a demonstrable western perspective, and a Quebec point of view. The bulk of coverage was shallow and simplistic in tone and content. Its focus on the opinions of a certain select political elite demonstrated that the media remain mired in institutionalized perspectives. And it was clearly influenced by both regionalist and organizational concerns and perspectives. The coverage of this event was not comprehensive, as it did not attempt to step outside the standardized pathways of interpretation, but rather served to perpetuate the establishment. There was a paucity of intelligent debate over Trudeau's "hierarchy of rights" argument, instead a focus on his legacy to provincial citizens (in Alberta rooted in the consequences to provincial revenues wrought by the National Energy Program, and in Quebec by the province's "humiliation" by being "left out" of the agreement negotiated in the 1981-82 period) and thus why residents of those provinces should reject outright, or simply ignore his opinions. No mention was made of the rationale behind the N.E.P. at the time, nor of the fact that the settlement that became the Constitutional Act, 1982 was not without its defenders at the time among the people of Quebec. In other words, there were no reasons offered by any paper to reassess the Trudeau record, only a reiteration of the criticisms leveled against his governments and his legacy by a predictable cast of detractors ranging from Peter Lougheed to Jacques Parizeau. The reporting of the former prime minister's speech thus had important political and social implications. The present level of alienation felt by a majority of Canadians from their elected representatives, and indeed most authority figures is at least in part a function of such media coverage.

This event exposed a substantive division between these papers and their readership. But the reporting of Trudeau's speech and the subsequent reaction to it also demonstrated an interesting result of chain ownership: such ownership results in a uniformity of coverage, a uniformity that may act to somewhat counteract regionalist interpretations. The use of common stories in widely separated markets was particularly evident in the Southam papers, but the popularity of Canadian Press pieces proved helpful in this regard. These stories performed a unifying role over the course of this survey. However, the criticisms made toward chain reporting remain undiminished: typically, it serves to solidify established views, dominated as it is by the opinions of a select few members of the Canadian political elite. In sum, one cannot make a blanket condemnation of the news media in this country based on their response to a single political event. But characteristics of their performance are sufficient ammunition for the author to be strongly critical of them. Aside from the possible benefits of chain-based reporting, the media product with regard to the October 1 speech remained dominated by standardized norms of interpretation and opinion, mired in regionalist perspectives, and offered little in the way of substantive policy debate to counteract the inevitable (and unnecessary) partisan demagoguery. As such, the media do little to help the tone of political discussion in this country, nor to foster Canadian unity.

Conclusion

The last quarter century has witnessed a revolution in Canadian politics. The mass media now have greater power than ever before to interpret and affect the national agenda, the performance and reputation of governments, and the nature and level of the average citizen's participation in the democratic process. The agencies of mass communication are crucial actors in the establishment of the values, priorities and bases of comparison held by the general public. Comprehensive academic research has documented both the existence and importance of the media's effect on political behavior: the product of its news agencies influence the priorities and bases of comparison held by members of their audience. But the fact that the media agenda -- the information selected, and the interpretation given to it -- is itself the product of a variety of constraints is problematic. The impact of ownership structures, professional behavior, audience conceptions, legal restrictions, political manipulation, cultural environments, and technical limitations on media content is considerable; the public agenda itself is substantially a product of those media influences. But these forces often mitigate, or are directly prejudicial toward a reasoned, comprehensive, and accurate relaying of information. In accordance with the academic evidence of pervasive media "gatekeeping", "agenda-setting" and "priming", this thesis has made two assertions about the media: first, the media play a significant role in setting the public agenda, and second, that various legal, technical, political, economic, occupational and environmental factors influence the substance of that agenda.

The test data offers evidence that, in Canada, economic, occupational and environmental considerations are the most important of these factors. In the instance of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's response to the Charlottetown Accord, readily discernible patterns of news coverage and interpretation were apparent, patterns that may be attributed to provincial location and fact of ownership. Papers belonging to the same chain displayed noted similarities in their interpretation of events, frequently utilizing the same stories, columns and graphics. It is plausible, therefore, that ownership concentration in the communications industry may have a beneficial effect of imposing a centralized, pan-Canadian perspective. That the readers of *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Edmonton Journal* and *The Ottawa Citizen* are unknowingly exposed to the same journalistic portrayal of certain events, may mitigate against the regionalist perspectives that they are exposed to with regard to others. With regard to the specific subject of the test case, patterns of organizational behavior were indeed evident in the story angles chosen by journalists, those whose opinions they sought, and the overall scope and tone of their articles. The media coverage awarded to Trudeau's attack on the Charlottetown Accord confirmed the pack journalism idea: coverage in all papers revolved around a central theme (Trudeau was an angry, bitter man, who was not only responsible for the national unity crisis, but was actively working to sabotage the efforts of those who sought to resolve it), displayed a marked absence of reasoned debate over his argument, and a satisfaction with the publicizing of polemical exchanges and personal attacks. Regional identifications were demonstrably evident in the media coverage of Trudeau's speech; there was indeed a characteristically "Western" and "Quebec" response in the reaction of journalists. The coverage of the newspapers in the western provinces (particularly in British Columbia and Alberta) to the former prime minister's words contained frequent references to the expansion of federal powers and increased taxation that occurred under his governments. The Liberals National Energy Program was selected for particular condemnation. In Quebec, the staffs of both the sovereigntist *Le Devoir* and the federalist *Montreal Gazette* selected Trudeau's "betrayal" of the province during the 1981-82 patriation negotiations for special emphasis.

Thus media interpretations of this particular event followed predictable, standardized paths, principally along regional-linguistic lines. This offers substantiation to the author's assertion that media coverage may solidify and exacerbate existent tensions and selfish perspectives. Further, media coverage of this event displayed characteristics rooted in organizational patterns. It is indeed plausible that the product of the news media contributes to the nation's most serious societal rift: the linguistic-political divide. By portraying Canadian and Quebec politics in a vacuum, the media may assist in continuing the misunderstanding and misconceptions so prevalent in Canadian politics today. In this country, news is sometimes a disconnected reality.

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